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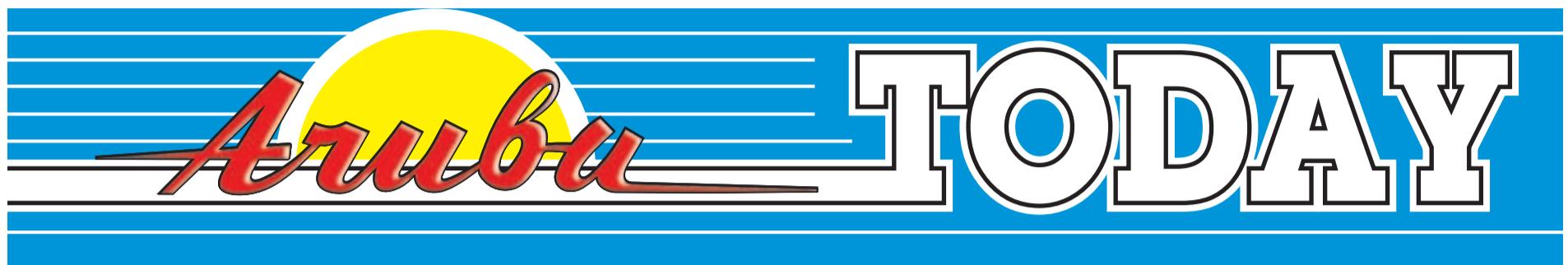


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ARUBA CONVENTION
BUREAU PROMOTING
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On Top Of The News Email:news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel:+297 582-7800 Saturday, January 11, 2014



An Olympic torch bearer Viktor Basargin holds the Olympic torch as he lights a symbolic Olympic flame during the torch relay in Perm, Russia. The US State Department issued a broad travel warning Friday, January 10, 2014, to Americans planning on travelling abroad to the Sochi Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

(AP Photo/Olympictorch2014.com)

US Issues Travel Alert For Sochi Olympics

MATTHEW LEE
AP Diplomatic Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) —

Americans planning to attend the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, should be vigilant about their security due to potential terrorist threats, crime and uncertain medical care, the State Department advised Friday.

In a travel alert, the department said it was not aware of specific threats to U.S. interests related to the Games that begin next month. But it said large events like the Olympics are “an attractive target for terrorists” and Americans should be aware of their surroundings and take common-sense precau-

tions to stay safe, notably on public transport. Public transport in the general vicinity of Sochi has been targeted by terrorists as recently as late December, although the department stressed that those attacks took place in the city of Volgograd, some 600 miles (965 kilometers) from the Games venue.

A group designated by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organization, the Caucasus Emirate, has called for attacks on the Olympics, it said. Although the group’s ability to strike the Games is not clear, the alert noted that the group has in the past been responsible for large-scale attacks on targets including a

ski resort, a metro system, a high-speed rail, an airport and a theater.

The alert pointed out that Russia has vowed to take appropriate security measures to protect athletes, spectators and infrastructure.

Continued on page 3

South Sudan retakes oil town from rebels

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) — South Sudanese troops on Friday retook the capital of an oil-producing state from rebels loyal to the country's former vice president, a military spokesman said. Government troops retook Bentiu, the capital of Unity state, after a 2 1/2-hour battle, Col. Philip Aguer said. Aguer said the forces loyal to the former vice presi-

viding assistance to the population in Bentiu has been looted," MSF General Director Arjan Hehenkamp said.

The loss of Bentiu weakens Machar at the negotiating table in Ethiopia, where mediators are trying to defuse a political conflict that broke out Dec. 15 and descended into ethnic attacks and military battles.

Most of those killed, she said, are combatants who died in major battles: in the capital, Juba, and in Bor, the capital of Jonglei state. In all, fighting has been seen in 30 locations, said Copeland, who said her estimate is a compilation of figures from the U.N., aid workers, the internally displaced, government officials and combatants.

tations. On Friday, the U.N. Security Council released a statement calling for Kiir's government to release the political detainees to promote the talks, and for both sides — "Mr. Machar in particular" — to declare a cease-fire and begin broader peace negotiations. The Security Council also "strongly discouraged



A United Nations helicopter offloads supplies at the airport, to be taken to a nearby U.N. camp where the displaced have sought shelter, in Malakal, South Sudan. South Sudanese troops on Friday retook the capital of an oil-producing state from rebels loyal to the country's former vice president, a military spokesman said.

dent, Riek Machar, had "destroyed" the town. Rebels looted the bank, stole food and set the market on fire, Aguer said. Doctors Without Borders, which is also known as MSF, said its facilities in Bentiu were also looted.

"It is unacceptable that one of the only humanitarian organizations still pro-

Hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese have been displaced in the nearly monthlong conflict. The U.N. has said only that more than 1,000 people are believed to have been killed. But Casie Copeland, South Sudan analyst for the International Crisis Group, said Friday she believes nearly 10,000 have died.

Aguer said troops will soon retake Bor, which rebels still control. Talks in Ethiopia haven't made much progress. Machar's side insists that 11 political prisoners held by the government of President Salva Kiir must be released. The U.S. has also called for the release of those prisoners so they can take part in the nego-

external intervention that would exacerbate the military and political tensions." Uganda is an ally of Kiir's government and has sent in hundreds of troops and provided Sudanese government forces with military hardware and threatened deeper intervention if militants move on the capital, Juba. □

Explosion used to fight Canada train fire

PLASTER ROCK, New Brunswick (AP) — A controlled explosion was used to blast holes in three tanker cars of a derailed oil train in an attempt to extinguish a large fire that continues to burn two and half days after the incident, a Canadian National Railway spokesman said Friday. A large fireball shot into the sky and a boom resounded after the blast. "Preliminary indications are everything went as planned," said Canadian National spokesman Jim Feeny.

Officials said 19 rail cars in the 122-car train derailed Tuesday night in a sparsely populated region roughly 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the U.S. border and northern Maine. No one was injured, but about 150 people living nearby were evacuated. There is no word yet on when they might be allowed to return to their homes.

The controlled explosion, known as vent and burn, was used on two tanker cars carrying liquefied petroleum gas that were

burning and a third one with the gas in it that was not on fire, Feeny said. Canada's Transportation Safety Board's lead investigator Guy Laporte said earlier this week that a crack in a wheel near the front of the train caused the wheel to loosen from the axle, resulting in the derailment of that wheel set. But Laporte said it's too early to determine what caused the train to leave the tracks. The incident again raised concerns about the in-

creasing use of rail to transport oil throughout North America. In July, 47 people were killed in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, when a train carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in the middle of a small community. A number of recent derailments in North America have worried both officials and residents close to rail lines. On Dec. 30, an oil train derailed and exploded in North Dakota, causing the evacuation of a nearby town but no injuries. □

Iran: issues are resolved over nuclear accord

RICK GLADSTONE

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Iran said Friday that talks in Geneva with the group of six world powers had resolved all outstanding issues on how to carry out an agreement reached in November that would temporarily halt some of Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

A report on Iranian state television quoted Abbas Araghchi, the deputy foreign minister and deputy nuclear negotiator, as saying that the details would now need final approval from all the governments: Iran and the P5-plus-1 countries — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, which are the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, plus Germany.

Araghchi was quoted as saying that "we found solutions for all the points of disagreements, but the implementation of the Geneva agreement depends on the final ratification of the capitals." He did not specify a target date, although officials have said privately that it is Jan. 20.

A spokesman for the P5-plus-1 side of the talks, represented by Helga Schmid, deputy to the lead negotiator, Catherine Ashton, the European Union's top foreign policy official, issued an emailed statement that did not go quite as far as Iran's.

"Deputy Secretary General Schmid and Deputy Foreign Minister Araghchi made very good progress on all the pertinent issues," said the statement from the spokesman, Michael Mann. "This is now under validation at political level in capitals."

The two-day round of talks in Geneva was held against a backdrop of rising pressure to implement the agreement reached nearly two months ago, which was regarded at the time as a diplomatic breakthrough that could lead to a resolution of the decade-old dispute over Iran's nuclear activities. Western countries and Israel say those activities are a cloak to attain the ability to make nuclear weapons, while Iran says they are purely for peaceful purposes. □

House votes to increase security steps on health care exchanges

ASHLEY PARKER
© 2014 New York Times

WASHINGTON - The House voted Friday to strengthen security protections on the HealthCare.gov website, requiring all security breaches of the health insurance exchanges to be reported in a timely fashion.

The bill - known as the "Health Exchange Security and Transparency Act" - passed largely on party lines, 291-122, with 67 Democrats voting for the legislation. The measure would require the health department to inform affected consumers within two business days of any possible breach of the federal or state exchanges.

The legislation is the latest effort by Republicans to capitalize on troubled rollout of President Barack Obama's signature health care law, which they view as a major weakness for the president and congressional Democrats.

In a news conference Thursday, Speaker John A. Boehner said the bill was "part of a broader effort to protect the American people from the consequences of this disastrous law." He said that although Obama "doesn't want anyone to see what's taking place with this law," he himself believes that "the millions of Americans being hurt by it, frankly, have a right to know."

Some Democrats have argued that the bill is an example of Republicans' overstating the problems on the health care website. On Thursday, the ranking Democrats on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform - Reps. Elijah E. Cummings of Maryland and Henry A. Waxman of California - released a memo pointing out that there had been "no successful security attacks to date" on HealthCare.gov and that the agency already had protocols in place for notifying affected users about any security breaches. □

In West Virginia: Chemical spill leaves thousands without water

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

ASHLEY SOUTHALL

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. -

As federal prosecutors opened an investigation Friday into a chemical spill in West Virginia that had contaminated drinking water used by more than 200,000 residents, state officials said it remained unclear when

cyclohexane Methanol, or MCHM, a compound used to wash coal of impurities, according to the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

Booth Goodwin, the U.S. attorney for the southern part of West Virginia, said in a statement that his office and "other federal law enforcement authorities have

dent of Freedom Industries, which owns the storage tank, said in a statement that the company was working to determine how much of the chemical had actually spilled. The company also is working to contain the leak to prevent additional contamination, Southern told The Associated Press.



South Charleston, W. Va. residents line up, jugs in hand, to get water being passed out at the South Charleston Community Center Friday, Jan. 10, 2014. Schools and restaurants closed, grocery stores sold out of bottled water, and state legislators who had just started their session canceled the day's business after a chemical spill in the Elk River in Charleston shut down much of the city and surrounding counties.

tap water would be safe to use. The spill that has affected Charleston and the nine surrounding counties was discovered around noon Thursday at a storage facility on the Elk River, where a 48,000-gallon tank began leaking 4-Methyl-

opened an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the release." "We will determine what caused it and take whatever action is appropriate based on the evidence we uncover," Goodwin said. Gary Southern, the presi-

The chemical, which smells like licorice, can cause headaches, eye and skin irritation, and difficulty breathing from prolonged exposures at high concentrations, according to the American Conference of Governmental Industrial

(AP Photo/Robert Wojcieszak)

Hygienists. Officials in West Virginia said they did not know how much of the chemical had leaked into the river or what its potential health impact might be. The state's order not to drink tap water or use household water to bathe, brush teeth, supplement infant formula or cook was made in an abundance of caution, officials said.

"We don't know that the water is not safe, but I can't say it is safe," Jeff McIntyre, president of West Virginia American Water Co., which supplies most of the household water in the area, said at a news conference Friday.

McIntyre said boiling water would not effectively eliminate the risk of illness.

Stores in the area ran out of bottled water Thursday, as people ignored pleas to not hoard supplies. Schools, government offices, restaurants and other businesses were closed Friday. Hotel guests were told not to use the water.

On Friday morning, residents waited in long lines for bottled water or water being distributed via tanker trucks parked outside community centers, schools and colleges.

At the South Charleston Community Center, where water, about 400 gallons, was being given to residents, people arrived with jugs and other containers for their four-gallon allotment. □

US Issues Travel Alert For Sochi Olympics

Continued from Front

On Thursday in Washington, FBI Director James Comey said the Russians are devoting substantial resources and effort to securing the Olympics.

"We have been in regular communication — including me personally — with their security organizations to make sure we're coordinating well. I think that we are," Comey told reporters in Washington. "We've

improved our information sharing on counterterrorism and it's important. Securing any Olympics is an enormous task. It's particularly challenging in Sochi because of its proximity to areas of unrest and sources of the terrorist threat. The Russian government understands the threat and is devoting the resources to address it."

Comey said the FBI would deploy "at least a couple dozen people in Moscow and maybe a smaller number but still a dozen or more

people of different specialties" in Sochi.

In addition to the potential for terrorism, the State Department said Americans should consider buying private medical evacuation insurance if they attend the Olympics as medical facilities are "untested" in Sochi, which has never before hosted such a large event. It also warned Americans to be wary of common criminal activity, which tends to rise at most large gatherings around the world.

The alert also advised les-

bian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans to review the State Department's LGBT travel information page if they plan to visit Sochi for the Games, noting that Russia has in place a law that bans the "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" to minors. It said authorities have been vague about defining "propaganda" and that the law applies to foreigners. A conviction on the charge could result in a fine, a jail term and deportation. □



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US to recognize Utah gay marriages despite state stance

CHARLIE SAVAGE

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WASHINGTON — The Obama administration on Friday said it would recognize as lawful the marriages

sex marriage rights in one of America's most socially conservative states, the administration posted a video on the Justice Department's website mak-

who rushed to obtain marriage licenses after a federal judge last month unexpectedly struck down Utah's ban on same-sex marriage.



Moudi Sbeity, left, and Derek Kitchen in their home in Salt Lake City, Jan. 7, 2014. The couple were among the lead plaintiffs in a case which led to Utah's same-sex marriage ban being ruled unconstitutional, but many of the more than 1,000 couples who got married before the state appealed and secured a temporary halt to marriages are now waiting nervously to see what Utah's next move will be.

(Jim McAuley/The New York Times)

of 1,300 same-sex couples in Utah, even though the state government is refusing to do so.

Wading into the fast-moving legal battle over same-

ing the announcement. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. said the federal government would grant federal marriage benefits to the same-sex couples

"I am confirming today that, for purposes of federal law, these marriages will be recognized as lawful and considered eligible for all relevant federal ben-

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efits on the same terms as other same-sex marriages," Holder said in the video. "These families should not be asked to endure uncertainty regarding their status as the litigation unfolds."

The Justice Department's intervention added a further sense of whiplash to the highly charged dispute, which began on Dec. 20 when a U.S. District Court judge, Robert J. Shelby, ruled that Utah's constitutional amendment limiting marriage to one man and one woman violated the federal Constitution.

As same-sex couples flooded county clerk's offices in Utah, the state government asked a higher court to block the order while it appealed the ruling, but a federal appeals court declined to do so, and the marriages continued. On Monday, the Supreme

Court issued a stay, bringing a halt to further same-sex marriages while the litigation continues. That decision effectively left those same-sex couples in legal limbo.

Then, on Wednesday, the office of the governor of Utah, Gary R. Herbert, said the state would not recognize as lawful the same-sex marriages already licensed while it pressed forward with its appeal of the ruling. "The original laws governing marriage in Utah return to effect pending final resolution by the courts," Derek Miller, the chief of staff to Herbert, wrote in a memo to state officials.

"It is important to understand that those laws include not only a prohibition of performing same-sex marriages but also recognizing same-sex marriages." □

US pork producers call for more humane treatment

JUSTIN JUOZAPAVICIUS
Associated Press

TULSA, Oklahoma (AP) — The call by animal rights groups to improve conditions on U.S. hog farms advanced considerably this week when two of the country's biggest meat companies urged producers to change how pregnant sows are housed, and one said it wanted to stop the practice of killing sick or injured animals by "manual blunt force."

Tyson Foods sent new animal welfare guidelines to its 3,000 independent hog suppliers on Wednesday — roughly six weeks after video from an Oklahoma farm showed some animals being struck with bowling balls and others being slammed onto a concrete floor. Smithfield Foods, the

world's largest pork producer, announced Tuesday it would ask growers to move pregnant sows from gestation crates to group housing by 2022.

The change in corporate policy comes after decades of lobbying and protests from animal rights groups and a trend that saw more food retailers and restaurant chains moving away from suppliers who used the controversial practices. Several animal rights groups praised the planned overhaul.

Some had campaigned against gestation crates, which are cramped, often foul stalls that barely allow a sow to take a step forward or backward and have been used for decades. □

New Jersey:

Documents in scandal indicate effort to hide political motive

MARC SANTORA

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Top officials at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey loyal to Gov. Chris Christie went to

and what has become the gravest challenge to Christie's political career after it was revealed that a top aide was intimately involved in the matter.

The woman said her husband was 40 minutes late to a job he had just gotten after being out of work for more than a year.

The decision to close the

it out. Inspector Darcy Lirosh of the Port Authority Police Department, who was assigned to place the orange cones directing traffic away from three toll lanes, wrote that her superiors could not tell her how long the new traffic pattern was intended to last or whether Fort Lee officials had been informed of the change. For months, Christie steadfastly had denied that his administration had played any role in the decision to close the traffic lanes. At the same time, lawmakers held hearings and subpoenaed witnesses and documents to determine exactly what happened.

On Wednesday, some of those communications were made public, revealing that one of Christie's top aides played an integral role in ordering the lanes closed and that the motivation was to punish the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee, who refused to endorse Christie's re-election campaign.

On Aug. 13, that aide, Bridget Anne Kelly, one

of the governor's deputy chiefs of staff, sent an email to David Wildstein, a Christie appointee at the Port Authority, saying, "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee." "Got it," Wildstein replied.

One month later, on Sept. 9, several local lanes onto the bridge, the world's busiest, were suddenly closed, snarling traffic in Fort Lee and causing headaches for thousands of commuters. The lanes remained closed for days.

As the matter came under increasing scrutiny, Wildstein and another Christie loyalist at the Port Authority, Bill Baroni, resigned under a cloud of suspicion. Still, Christie dismissed any suggestion that the traffic jam was caused in order to send a message that opposing Christie came with consequences. But on Thursday he said he knew he was mistaken after he read the communications between his aides and Port Authority officials.

"I was wrong," Christie said at a news conference. □



New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, second left, arrives at Fort Lee, N.J., City Hall. Top officials at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey loyal to Gov. Chris Christie went to elaborate means to make it appear that the closing of several lanes leading to the George Washington Bridge from Fort Lee, N.J., was part of a traffic study even though private communications suggest the move was purely political, according to documents released Friday by New Jersey lawmakers.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

elaborate means to make it appear that the closing of several lanes leading to the George Washington Bridge from Fort Lee, N.J., was part of a traffic study even though private communications suggest the move was purely political, according to documents released Friday by New Jersey lawmakers.

Among the more than 1,000 pages of documents released was a PowerPoint presentation prepared after three days of snarled traffic in September, titled "EARLY assessment of the benefits of the trial." The conclusion: "T.B.D."

Ultimately, the traffic diversion led to four mornings of gridlock, months of investigations into whether the move was a blunt display of political payback

The release of the documents, which included emails and texts among top officials in the Christie administration and officials at the Port Authority, which operates the bridge, came one day after Christie apologized for, he said, unwittingly misleading the public, calling the entire episode "embarrassing and humiliating."

The anger the traffic jam caused among commuters is also evident in the documents. Robert Durando, manager of the George Washington Bridge, received an email Sept. 9, the first day of the toll closings, about a customer complaining that the Port Authority "doesn't care about their customers and they are playing God with people's jobs."

lanes seems to have been met with confusion by both local officials and workers who were ordered to carry

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Jindal heading to Asia for economic development trip

MELINDA DESLATTE

Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP)

— Gov. Bobby Jindal's administration is providing few details about the

where Jindal will be and little information about the companies and government officials with whom he'll be meeting on the state-funded trip to Japan,

years in office. It comes at a time that Jindal is considered a possible 2016 presidential candidate, though the governor says the trip is designed solely to bolster

said. He added, "It's just a great opportunity to get in front of some senior decision-makers."

He and Economic Development Secretary Stephen Moret said they will meet with leaders of 10 companies in the energy, chemical and manufacturing industries, most of which are considering projects in Louisiana. Also planned are sit-downs with senior government officials to discuss expanding economic ties.

But besides saying the company executives include representatives of Formosa and Shintech, which already have business operations in Louisiana, the administration hasn't issued other information about the visits that are planned.

Jindal and Moret said they're providing limited details because they don't want to tip their hand to other states about what kind of business deals Louisiana is developing and what projects the state is trying to woo. Many of the businesses don't want the meetings disclosed, the governor said.

"Many of these other companies don't want to pub-

licly discuss the fact they're considering investing in the United States," Jindal said. "These are significant manufacturing companies. These are companies that are considering collectively investments of billions of dollars in the United States that will create thousands if not tens of thousands of jobs."

The governor also said he'll be meeting with top government officials in the countries and will release those details after the visits occur because of security concerns and issues of protocol in the different locations.

The administration delegation is a small one, containing Jindal, Moret, the governor's communications director, two of Moret's top deputies and the governor's security detail.

A general outline provided by Jindal spokesman Kyle Plotkin shows the group arriving in Taiwan and staying through Monday, spending Tuesday and Wednesday in South Korea and Thursday and Friday in Japan, before returning to Louisiana. "It's a jam-packed trip," said Plotkin, who will be traveling with the governor. □



Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal speaks in Hot Springs, Ark. Jindal's administration has provided few details about the governor's Asian economic development mission, which begins Saturday.

(AP Photo/Danny Johnston)

governor's Asian economic development mission, which begins Saturday. The administration has offered sketchy outlines of

South Korea and Taiwan. The week-long trip is the Republican governor's first overseas business development travel during his six

Louisiana's international business development and trade connections.

"There are real opportunities, not only in the short-term, but to build long-term relationships that will benefit our state," Jindal

benefit our state," Jindal

Chinese biz to put plant at former Ohio GM site

ANN SANNER

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)

A Chinese company will build an automotive glass-making plant in Ohio, creating up to 800 jobs and revitalizing a former General Motors factory site, officials said Friday.

Officials from Fuyao Glass Industry Group Co. and the owner of the site signed an agreement in Columbus. The company is making a \$200 million investment at the site in Moraine, near Dayton. Ohio officials said it's the biggest Chinese investment yet in Ohio.

State officials say the plant is expected to begin operations late next year, employing 800 people within three years. The General Motors assembly plant employed 1,100 workers when it closed in late 2008.

Fuyao plans to buy more than 1 million square feet (0.09 million sq. meters) of space in a deal worked out with the state's private development arm, JobsOhio, with involvement by local and regional development officials. Details of incentives offered the company were not immediately disclosed. Ohio said other Midwestern states and some in the South also completed for the plant.

"We appreciate Ohio's strategic location, workforce and pro-business environment in making this decision to open our North American facility," Cao Dewang, Fuyao's chairman, said in a statement. Michael Robinet, managing director of IHS Automotive in Southfield, Michigan, said that Chinese and Indian companies have estab-

lished other auto-related operations in the United States. But he said the Moraine investment is a major development.

"It's quite sizable," Robinet said. He said the plant site near Interstate 75 would put the supplier within about four hours of automaking plants in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana producing more than 3 million vehicle units combined annually.

Industrial Realty Group acquired the former GM plant site in 2011 and renamed it "Progress Park." Smaller companies already are operating there. The General Motors plant that produced sport utility vehicles had employed more than 4,000 people before its decline and end while the U.S. auto industry struggled in the last decade. □

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US Financial Front:

American wholesale stockpiles up 0.5%

MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. wholesale businesses increased their stockpiles in November but at less than half the pace of October when they had jumped by the largest amount in two years.

Wholesalers boosted stockpiles 0.5 percent in November compared with October when inventories had increased 1.3 percent, the Commerce Department reported Friday. The October gain had been the biggest one-month increase since a 1.5 percent rise in October 2011.

Sales were solid in both months, rising 1 percent in November following a 1.1 percent increase in October.

Rising stockpiles boost growth because it means factories have produced more goods. Robust restocking contributed two-fifths of the 4.1 percent growth rate in the July-September quarter. Economists say growth slowed in the fourth quarter in large part because they believe the pace of restocking slowed following the third quarter surge.

With the November gain, inventories at the whole-



Driver Kyle Woodroof loads packages in his delivery truck in Kansas City, Mo. The Commerce Department reported how much wholesalers adjusted their stockpiles in November and how much their sales changed on Friday, Jan. 10, 2014.

(AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

sale level stood at a seasonally adjusted \$516.4 billion, 3.3 percent higher than a year ago.

The government tracks inventories held by wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers. A report covering all inventory levels will be released next Tuesday.

At the wholesale level, auto stockpiles dropped by 0.8 percent in December while stockpiles of computer equipment rose 3 percent after a big 5.7

percent decline in October. Recently, various signs of strength including a big improvement in the trade deficit have prompted economists to boost their forecasts for fourth quarter growth. Some now believe growth will be around 3 percent, an upgrade from early estimates that growth would be less than 2 percent.

Analysts believe the momentum will carry over into 2014, reflecting bet-

ter-than-expected recent gains.

Factory activity as measured by the Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index stayed near a 2 1/2-year high in December. Americans are buying more cars and homes, increasing demand for steel, furniture and other manufactured goods.

The reports add to encouraging signs that 2014 could mark a turning point for an economy that has struggled through to gain altitude since the Great Recession ended in June 2009.

Analysts expect the economy will face fewer barriers in 2014 especially in the area of federal government policies. Higher taxes in 2013 and across-the-board spending cuts shaved an estimated 1.5 percentage points from growth last year.

Many economists are looking for growth close to 3 percent in 2014, up from an expected 1.8 percent growth rate in 2013. □

US judge orders an auction for failed auto maker Fisker

RANDALL CHASE
AP Business Writer

WILMINGTON, Delaware (AP) — A U.S. bankruptcy judge on Friday ordered a competitive auction for the assets of Fisker Automotive, rejecting a proposal by a group led by Hong Kong billionaire Richard Li to assume control of the failed electric auto manufacturer in a private sale.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Kevin Gross refused to accept Hybrid Technology LLC's plan to use \$75 million it said it is owed as Fisker's senior secured lender as a credit bid for Fisker's assets. Agreeing with Fisker's official creditors committee that a competitive auction was the best way to maximize recoveries for Fisker creditors, Gross capped Hybrid's credit bid at \$25 million.

Chinese auto parts conglomerate Wanxiang Group Corp. offered an alternative cash bid of \$35.7 million as the starting point for a competitive auction. California-based Fisker, which had planned to build cars at a former General Motors plant in Delaware, filed for bankruptcy protection in November. The move culminated a long downward spiral that began after Fisker received a \$529 million loan commitment from the U.S. Department of Energy. Hybrid recently

paid \$25 million for DOE's outstanding loan balance of more than \$160 million, which resulted in a loss to U.S. taxpayers of \$139 million. It then moved to take control of Fisker using a \$75 million credit bid based on what it claimed it was owed as the company's new senior secured lender.

Hybrid also offered about \$2 million in cash to go along with its credit bid and agreed to waive millions in fees it would be due for serving as Fisker's lender during the bankruptcy case. But it did not want to buy the former GM site in Wilmington and indicated that it had no interest in building cars in Delaware.

Wanxiang, on the other hand, filed court papers this week saying it would continue development and design of a second-generation line of Fisker vehicles, and that once such vehicles were ready for mass production "in volumes that necessitate a separate manufacturing facility," it would manufacture them at the now-shuttered GM plant. Wanxiang had indicated in earlier court documents that it wanted to resume production of Fisker's problem-plagued first-generation car, the Karma, in Finland and eventually shift production to a Michigan facility. □

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Israel publishing plans for new housing in settlements: report

JODI RUDOREN

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JERUSALEM - The Israeli government on Friday published plans to build 1,400 new housing units in Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, a move the chief Palestinian negotiator condemned as "a slap" to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's intense push for a Middle East peace deal.

The housing announcement was hardly a surprise. Israeli officials originally said they would promote these units in conjunction with the Dec. 31 release of 26 long-serving Palestinian prisoners, but then promised to delay the plan until after Kerry's latest shuttle-diplomacy visit. It continues a pattern that began with the peace talks this summer in which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has struggled to please his politically complex coalition government by both engaging in the talks and continuing to expand settlements, something the Palestinians and many in the international community contend undermines the prospects for a two-state solution. "Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu sent a message to Mr. Kerry today, and the message reads: Do not continue your peace efforts," the Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, said in an interview. "They know very well that this destroys the peace process."

Mark Regev, a spokesman for Netanyahu, declined to comment on the housing ministry's announcement. A senior Israeli official, who insisted on anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly, said Israel had agreed to release Palestinian prisoners convicted of killing Israelis as part of the peace talks but not to freeze settlement construction. He noted that all the new units are slated for the so-called settlement blocs that most Israeli leaders have vowed never to give up. "Israel is strictly honoring all the understandings that were reached to facilitate the current peace talks," the official said.

"If you look at every peace plan that's been on the table," he added, "there are differences between the different plans, but in all of them, the large settlement blocs remain part of the final-status peace. If you're building in areas that are going to remain part of Israel in any agreement, are we really changing the map of peace?" The new plans include 600 units in Ramat Shlomo, a neighborhood in the northern part of Jerusalem where plans for similar construction announced during a 2010 visit by Vice President Joe Biden led to a major clash with the Obama administration. There is also more planned housing in the Gush Etzion area south of Jerusalem and in Ariel, a large settlement about 12 miles into the West Bank, along with several smaller ones nearby. In addition, the government re-published old plans that were never implemented for nearly 500 units in Pisgat Ze'ev and Ramot, also in northern Jerusalem. Israel seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan in the 1967 war; it later annexed East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians see as the capital of their future state. Most of the world considers these territories to be occupied, and any settlement there illegal.

Friday's construction announcement comes as Kerry is trying to cajole Netanyahu and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority to agree to a framework for continuing the peace talks that would set out the core principles of an agreement and buy more time to deal with the details. The framework would likely call for a division of the land along the 1967 lines with some swaps to accommodate settlements, Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state with protections for Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinian refugees, and twin capitals in the Jerusalem area. □

Syria: 500 reported killed in rebel infighting

ZEINA KARAM

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — With nearly 500 people reported killed in a week of rebel infighting, many Syrians barricaded themselves in their homes Friday, while others emerged from mosques angrily accusing an al-Qaida-linked group of hijacking their revolution.

The rebel-on-rebel clashes have overshadowed the battle against President Bashar Assad and underscore the perils for civilians caught in the crossfire of two parallel wars.

The violence, which pits fighters from a variety of Islamic groups and mainstream factions against the feared al-Qaida-linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, have spread across four provinces in opposition-held parts of northern Syria. The infighting is help-

ing Assad, whose forces have clawed back some of the ground lost to the rebels in recent months as they bombard the north and other opposition regions with warplanes, heavy artillery and crude explosive-filled barrels dropped over rebel neighborhoods.

"The revolution has been derailed," said Abdullah Hasan, a self-described secular activist in the northern town of Maskaneh, where fighters from the al-Qaida-linked group swept in last month. "None of the groups fighting in Syria represent me now," he said, adding that he was nonetheless hopeful that the infighting would help purge extremists from the ranks of the rebels. The latest bout of violence broke out a week ago across northern Syria and is the most serious among opponents of Assad

since the civil war began. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Friday that at least 482 people have been killed in the infighting since Jan. 3. It said 157 were from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, 240 from more moderate factions and 85 were civilians.

The death toll mirrors and even exceeds casualties from the broader war between government forces and the rebels in the same time frame. The Observatory, which documents casualties on a daily basis through a network of activists on the ground, has recorded 385 people killed between Jan. 3 and Jan. 9 in fighting between rebels and government forces. But casualties among soldiers are difficult to track down and are often under reported. □



A protester holds a placard depicting U.S. President Barack Obama during a demonstration in Kafr Nabil town, Idlib province, northern Syria, Friday, Jan. 10, 2014. Rebel-on-rebel fighting between an al-Qaida-linked group and an array of more moderate and ultraconservative Islamists has killed nearly 500 people over the past week in northern Syria. The Arabic on the poster is an acronym meaning, "the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant."

(AP Photo/Edlib News Network ENN)

Venezuelans pay last respects to slain actress

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Hundreds of Venezuelans are paying their last respects to a popular actress whose slaying in front of her 5-year-old daughter has reignited debate about the nation's rampant crime.

Former Miss Venezuela

Monica Spear and her ex-husband were gunned down Monday night. They apparently were trying to resist a robbery attempt after their car broke down on an isolated stretch of highway. Their murder was witnessed by their 5-year-old daughter.

Fans, fellow artists and rela-

tives formed long lines to bid farewell to Spear at a funeral Friday in Caracas. While authorities have made several arrests in the case, the murder is putting pressure on President Nicolas Maduro for his failure to bring down crime that has soared during more than 14 years of socialist rule. □

British far-right leader courting European allies

DEREK GATOPoulos
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — A far-right British political party's leader said Friday that extreme nationalist groups across Europe will seek to forge an alliance after the European Parliament elections in May despite being isolated by an emerging populist right.

British National Party leader Nick Griffin said parties likely to join the alliance would include the Jobbik party in Hungary and Greece's Golden Dawn, which has seen a surge in popular support during the country's major financial crisis. Golden Dawn leaders, who have openly expressed admiration for Adolf Hitler, deny any party involvement in frequent street attacks against immigrants despite mounting accusations to the contrary.

"We are all being demonized and dehumanized ... so I think it's only logical that the 'devils' have to stand together," Griffin, currently a non-aligned member of the European Parliament, told The Associated Press in an interview.

European nationalists are expected to make gains in the May 22-25 polls, but most have distanced themselves from the extreme right, according to Anders Widfeldt, a lecturer in politics and international affairs at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

"There is a general sense that immigration-critical and EU-critical parties will increase their support in the new European Parliament ... That's a big concern to established parties," he told the AP.

"But there's a distinction between those who see themselves as more mainstream and who are aiming to become legitimate cooperation partners with mainstream parties in their own countries."

They see a party like Golden Dawn as far too extreme and tainted by the accusations against them."n on the Law of the Sea. □

Nervous calm grips Fallujah, but clashes nearby

ADAM SCHRECK
QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Residents started to trickle back to the besieged city of Fallujah on Friday as militants and government forces both appear to be preparing for a long standoff. Al-Qaida-linked fighters and tribal gunmen are camped on the outskirts of the city, with Iraqi army and police stationed nearby.

A tense calm has settled over the city, although sporadic street fighting rattled Ramadi and surrounding areas in Sunni-dominated Anbar province, a vast desert region west of Baghdad that was once a major battleground for U.S. troops.

The extremist militants, emboldened by fellow fighters' gains in the civil war



Shakir Waheib, a senior member of the al-Qaida-linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), left, next to a burning police vehicle in Iraq's Anbar Province. With al-Qaida linked fighters and allied tribal gunmen camped on the outskirts, a tentative calm took hold over Fallujah on Friday, Jan. 10, 2014 and residents started to return to the besieged city west of Baghdad.

(AP Photo via militant website)

in neighboring Syria, have tried to position themselves as the champions of Iraqi Sunnis angry at the Shiite-led government over what

they see as efforts to marginalize them.

Violence spiked after the Dec. 28 arrest of a Sunni lawmaker sought on ter-

rorism charges and the government's dismantling of a year-old Sunni protest camp in Ramadi, the provincial capital, and Iraqi police were forced to retreat from the city centers as black masked gunmen overtook Fallujah and parts of Ramadi last week, burning down police stations and posting guards outside strategic areas.

Iraqi troops have taken up positions in and around both cities but have not launched major urban offensives, fearing that likely civilian casualties could incite Sunni anger and push moderate tribal leaders to side with the extremists.

Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammed al-Askari told The Associated Press on Friday that the government's patience would not last forever.n on the Law of the Sea. □

Philippines, Vietnam condemn China's fishing law

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Philippines and Vietnam on Friday condemned a new Chinese law that requires foreign fishermen to seek Beijing's approval to operate in much of the South China Sea, where overlapping territorial claims have escalated tensions.

China's assertiveness in pressing its claims in the waters, which are believed to have significant seabed gas and oil deposits, has unnerved its smaller neighbors and created a potential military flashpoint. Anger is especially acute in Philippines and Vietnam, which believe they have strong claims on waters off their shores.

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Friday that the new Chinese regulation "escalates tensions, unnecessarily complicates the situation in the South China Sea, and threatens the peace and stability of the region."

Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman Luong Thanh Nghi said the law and other moves by China in recent months are "illegal and invalid" and

seriously violate Vietnam's sovereignty. "Vietnam demands that China abolish the above said erroneous acts, and practically contribute to the maintenance

of peace and stability in the region," he said. The Philippines said it asked China for clarification. It said the regulation, which took effect this month, re-

inforces China's expansive territorial claims and violates international law, particularly the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea. □

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France: Hollande may sue over report of affair

SCOTT SAYARE
© 2014 New York Times

PARIS - An angry President François Hollande of France on Friday said he was considering legal action against a glossy

right, like any citizen." He condemned the magazine, Closer, but notably did not deny its assertions. The statement said he was weighing possible action, including via the courts.



French President François Hollande and his companion Valerie Trierweiler attend a ceremony at the Invalides, in Paris. Rumors have long circulated that Hollande might have a lover. The magazine Closer published images Friday showing his bodyguard and a helmeted man it says is Hollande visiting what it says is the apartment of the actress.

(AP Photo/Charles Platiau)

tabloid that published an account of his purported affair with a 41-year-old comic actress who campaigned on his behalf in the presidential election of 2012.

In a statement to Agence France-Presse, Hollande, 59, said he "profoundly deplores the violations of the respect of private life, to which he has the

Hollande is not married but is in a public relationship with another woman. Closer, a weekly tabloid that in 2012 drew the British royal family's ire for publishing topless pictures of the Duchess of Cambridge, the former Kate Middleton, published a collection of photographs that it said documented Hollande's late-night meetings with

the actress, Julie Gayet, in an apartment building in Paris.

A woman whom the publication said was Gayet is seen arriving at the apartment block at night. The pictures then show the arrival of a man resembling Hollande's bodyguard. A second man - which Closer said was Hollande, whose face is obscured by a helmet - then arrives on the back of a scooter.

Other pictures show the first man arriving in the morning with what Closer said was a bag of croissants, then the second man in a helmet emerging from the building and jumping on the back of a scooter.

Another photograph shows a woman resembling Gayet leaving the building and walking down the street.

In years past, when the belief in privacy rights for French public officials was a bit stronger and when the French news media was a bit more chaste, the rumors about a love affair involving the president might have remained the unwritten gossip of Parisian journalists and the well-connected.

The amorous lives of public officials were long considered off limits for French journalists, many of whom have themselves become involved with politicians. This was the case, for instance, with Hollande's current "official companion."

Valérie Trierweiler, who began a relationship with Hollande while covering French politics for the magazine Paris Match. □

US State Department official says Cuba migration talks productive

HAVANA (AP) — A senior U.S. State Department official said Friday that migration talks with the Cuban government this week have been productive and yielded "some positive outcomes," but did not give concrete details of any agreements or breakthroughs.

Alex Lee, deputy assistant secretary at the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, told reporters that the Obama administration is open to seeking a new relationship with Havana, but it should go hand-in-hand with more political freedom in the Communist-run nation. "We at the same time want to have that opening reflect from the Cuban side a respect for Cubans who express themselves freely," Lee said. "To be able to petition their government with grievances without the danger of them being arrested. ... In the meantime, we are working on these sets of rather narrowly defined areas of cooperation."

The migration talks took place Thursday in the Cuban capital and ranged to cover other topics of mutual interest for the Cold War foes, including aviation safety, maritime search and rescue protocols and consular document fraud. Lee said Washington welcomed a year-old Cuban migratory policy change eliminating a longstanding exit visa requirement under which islanders had to ask their government's permission to travel abroad. He said that during three days in Havana, he met

with foreign diplomats and members of so-called civil society — primarily independent journalists, writers and political activists.

Lee also visited imprisoned U.S. government subcontractor Alan Gross, who is serving a 15-year sentence on a conviction for crimes against the Cuban state related to his work setting up hard-to-detect Internet networks for the island's tiny Jewish community. He declined to give details of their private discussion, and repeated Washington's previous calls for Gross' freedom.

"We believe that Alan should be released. ... We do not see any reason why he received such a harsh sentence," Lee said.

He added that during his discussions with Josefina Vidal, Josefina Vidal, director of the U.S. Division at Cuba's Foreign Ministry, and other island officials, they raised their concerns about four Cuban intelligence agents serving long terms in the United States.

"We took note," Lee said. The migration talks have in the past been used as a rare chance for dialogue between two countries that have not had full diplomatic relations for decades. They were suspended in 2011, the same year Cuba sentenced Gross to prison, but resumed last July. Cuban and American officials also met multiple times in 2013 on re-establishing direct mail service, and Lee said there have been conversations in areas such as counter-narcotics cooperation, oil spill preparation and transportation. □

Canadian, American boaters left in limbo in Mexico

AMY TAXIN

MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — When heavily armed marines and

The mostly American and Canadian retirees found out that the target was actually them — couples spending their golden

Department announced it had initiated seizure orders against 338 boats it accused of lacking a \$70 permit. The office says it

ent it. Others say minor numerical errors in paperwork were used as grounds for seizure. Some say they were away at the time and have never been officially notified at all, learning of the seizure only from local marina operators.

It is all part of a new effort by President Enrique Pena Nieto's administration to increase government revenues in a country with one of the worst tax-collection rates among the world's large economies. The push has drawn howls of protest from Mexicans upset about new sales taxes and levies on home sales. But few of the new measures were as unexpected or toughly enforced as what foreign pleasure boat owners call a heavy-handed crackdown over a minor permit, and they say it threatens a tourism sector Mexico has long sought to promote.

"They brought all these marines, with machine guns and stuff, and they kind of descended on the marina and everybody's going, 'Wow, there's a big narco thing going down here,'" said Richard Spindler, whose catamaran *Profligate* was impounded near Puerto Vallarta. "These are just retired people, 50-, 60-year-old retired people, mellow people. It was way

over the top."

The document in question, known as a Temporary Import Permit, can be obtained from a Mexican government website and proves holders own their boats and promise not to leave them in Mexico or sell them here.

Many boat owners say they simply weren't around when authorities came by and slapped liens on the boats barring them from leaving Mexico. They say officials have not told them how they could remedy the situation.

One boater said marina operators warned that anyone who tried to leave would be hunted down. The owner, who expressed fear that speaking out by name could bring reprisals, said officials had given no written notice of seizure on their boat, and they had learned of it second hand from marina workers.

Hundreds of boats did present their papers on time and weren't impounded. Elizabeth Shanahan, who lives on her boat at a marina in the Pacific coast resort of Nueva Vallarta, said she had no trouble when authorities came through, and that fellow boaters who didn't initially have their papers in order were given 10 days to comply. □



In this January 2014 photo, yachts are docked at a marina in the Bay of Acapulco, Mexico. After inspecting more than 1,600 vessels, the Mexican government's Treasury Department announced it had initiated seizure orders against hundreds of foreign boats it accused of lacking a temporary import permit which proves that the holders own their boats and promise not to leave them in Mexico or sell them here.

(AP Photo/Bernardino Hernandez)

government tax agents stormed eight marinas on Mexico's Pacific and Caribbean coasts, boaters thought they were witnessing a major drug take-down.

years sailing warm-weather ports in modest 40-foot boats.

After inspecting more than 1,600 vessels in late November, the Mexican government's Treasury

has four months to decide whether to release the boards or sell them at auction.

Many owners say they actually have the permit but were never asked to pres-

Chile:

Top court rules against coal-fired complex

EVA VERGARA
Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Chile's Supreme Court sided with local fishermen who contend a coal-fired power complex harms ocean life and pollutes their community, but the judges stopped short of ordering a suspension and left it to environmental authorities to decide if operations can continue.

The ruling on the Bocamina complex released Friday was another in a series of blows to big power projects in energy-strapped Chile, where concerns over environmental issues have been rising.

In December, an appeals court halted the 350-megawatt Bocamina II part of the

complex owned by Endesa Chile in the southern Bio Bio region, citing harm to fishermen's livelihood.

The 128-megawatt Bocamina I plant was allowed to keep running. But the Supreme Court said the whole complex should shut down unless officials determine the water-cooling system doesn't threaten or hurt marine life.

The company can only operate the Bocamina I and II thermoelectric plants if they don't put harm marine life or put it at risk, the high court said in a ruling made Thursday.

The court ordered Chile's environmental authorities to take all measures required, including "a halt of operations" if needed, until

the problem is fixed. Environmental groups and fishermen say the complex's use of huge amounts of seawater to cool its equipment damages the area.

"It has been sucking the water with tubes, destroying and spitting back dead fish and crustaceans into the water through its cooling system," said Lorenzo Soto, a lawyer representing fishermen. He called the court's finding "a great victory for the local fishing community."

Endesa Chile issued a statement that it has implemented a plan to reduce the risk of sea life being sucked into the cooling system and has given it to authorities. □

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Google apologizes for “Hitler” name on maps

BERLIN (AP) — Google apologized Friday after a Berlin intersection briefly regained its Nazi-era name, Adolf-Hitler-Platz, on the Google Maps service. Google spokeswoman Lena Wagner said the company quickly took down the name after the error was discovered. The inter-

section was relabeled with its proper name, Theodor-Heuss-Platz, after West Germany's first post-World War II president.

In a statement, Google said edits submitted by users of its Map Maker function “are reviewed either by the community of mapping volunteers or Google

moderators.” “In this particular case, the change in the street name was mistakenly approved, and we fixed it as soon as we were made aware,” it added. “We apologize for any offense caused.” The erroneous name was visible only for a few hours late Thursday. □

Scores of streets and squares were named after Hitler during his 1933-1945 dictatorship. The intersection in question, in western Berlin, sits on what the Nazis envisioned as the capital's main east-west axis for a redesign of the city that was never completed. □

Ex-oil tycoon Khodorkovsky travels to Israel

JERUSALEM (AP) — Former Russian oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky is in Israel for a short visit three weeks after he was released from prison by Russian President Vladimir Putin, his business partner said Friday.

Leonid Nevezlin told Israeli television station Channel 2 that Khodorkovsky has been in the country since Wednesday.

“He is here on a private visit to meet me, he is my best friend,” he told the broadcaster. He did not elaborate.

Khodorkovsky's Germany-based spokesman Christian Hanne confirmed the visit but would give no further details except to say it would be short.

Nevezlin has been in Israel since Khodorkovsky was arrested in 2003 on money laundering and tax evasion charges that many in the West consider trumped-up. Two other former shareholders, Vladimir Dubov and Mikhail Brudno, are also in Israel where they fled to avoid arrest.

Khodorkovsky had traveled to Switzerland last Sunday. He was pardoned by Putin and flown to Berlin on Dec. 20 after spending more than a decade in prison.

Khodorkovsky has business ties to Switzerland stretching back to his days as head of the Yukos oil company.

When Khodorkovsky was prosecuted for tax evasion and money laundering, Russian officials sought to seize about \$5 billion linked to Yukos that had been deposited in Switzerland.

prosecution of Khodorkovsky was politically motivated. It's unclear how much of the money belonged directly to Khodorkovsky, and whether he already has access to it.

Pussy Riot and the expected release of 30 Greenpeace activists detained since September are seen as the Kremlin's attempts to soothe criticism of the country's human rights



Mikhail Khodorkovsky speaks during a news conference in Berlin, Germany. Khodorkovsky is in Israel for a short visit three weeks after he was released from prison by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

(AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

But Swiss authorities refused to hand over the money after concluding that the

Russia's pardon of Khodorkovsky, the remaining members of punk band

record before the Winter Olympics in Sochi in February. □

Israel summons Dutch ambassador over divestment

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel has summoned the Dutch ambassador after PGGM of the Netherlands, one of the world's largest pension asset managers, divested from Israeli banks over their financing of settlements. Israel's Foreign Ministry said

in a statement Friday that it had asked Ambassador Caspar Veldkamp for a “clarification.”

The ministry told the ambassador that the decision “is unacceptable and relies on false pretense.”

On Wednesday, PGGM

said it divested from five Israeli banks because they are involved in financing construction in Jewish settlements.

Some 550,000 Israelis now live in settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, areas captured by

Israel from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast war, and which the Palestinians demand for their state.

The fate of the territory is a main focus in U.S.-mediated peace talks. □

China's December exports slow down, imports accelerate

JOE McDONALD
AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's export growth slowed in December while imports accelerated, possibly helping to temper fears of a slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

Exports rose 4.3 percent to \$207.7 billion, slowing from November's 12.7 percent expansion, trade data showed Friday.

Imports rose 8.3 percent to \$182.1 billion, up from the previous month's 7.6 percent.

China's economic growth tumbled to a two-decade low of 7.5 percent in the second quarter. It rebounded to 7.8 percent the following quarter but private sector analysts say that recovery is likely to fade. The Cabinet in late December said it expected 2013's full-year growth to be 7.6 percent, which would be the weakest performance since 1999.

“Our country's economic development was stable overall,” said a government spokesman, Zheng Yuesheng, at a news conference. However, he added, “China's foreign trade enterprises face a complex and fickle domestic and international environment.”

For the full year, exports were \$2.2 trillion while imports were \$1.9 trillion. China's global trade surplus widened by 12.6 percent to \$260.2 billion.

Zheng said it was the first time China's total annual trade topped \$4 trillion. China edged past the United States in 2012 as the world's biggest trader and likely widened its lead last year.

Analysts said December trade might be stronger than it appeared in comparison with figures a year earlier, when analysts believe exporters reported falsely inflated prices to evade currency controls and bring money into China for investment.

Citigroup said real growth might be 9 percent, more than double the reported level. □

LOCAL Aruba TODAY

Aruba Convention Bureau lays groundwork for successful 2014 and beyond



ORANJESTAD - As 2013 came to a close, the team at the Aruba Convention Bureau was in Orlando attending the SITE International Conference in December. SITE is a global

network of meetings and event professionals dedicated to delivering business results, with the year's conference welcoming several hundred delegates representing nearly



50 countries. Representing the Aruba Convention Bureau were Jerusha Rasmijn, Darysse Croes, and Hal Davis. The Aruba Convention Bureau was excited to have the opportunity to host a coffee break, where attendees enjoyed a special themed event and presentation in celebration of Aruba's 60th Carnaval. Group and incentive travel is a very important



segment of Aruba's tourism. Sharing the pleasures of Aruba and building relationships with the decision makers within the incentive travel industry are vital components of

the Aruba Convention Bureau's efforts to continue to attract groups and convention's to Aruba, making our island a premier destination in this travel demographic. □



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ster certainly forms part of this remarkable trend.

Its Caribbean/tropical decorated terrace is the favorite spot for most of the patrons visiting The Blue Lobster, while for those who want a bit more intimacy, The Blue Lobster offers a cozy and very romantic area with air condition superbly decorated with old time Aruba pictures, giving its customers that feeling of remembrance and nostalgia.

It's no wonder that TripAdvisor has awarded this restaurant with The Certificate Of Excellence for two consecutive years, 2012 and 2013. And "The Best Of Aruba" has reconfirmed that The Blue Lobster will retain its title of The Best Lobster House Of Aruba for the period 2014-2015. And no coincidence that The 10Best Travel Site has included The Blue Lobster in the 10 best restaurants of Aruba.

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consecutive years. The honorees were Jack and Kathleen Nappi from San Antonio, Florida. The honorees are loyal mem-

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Tony Voss Architectural Photography

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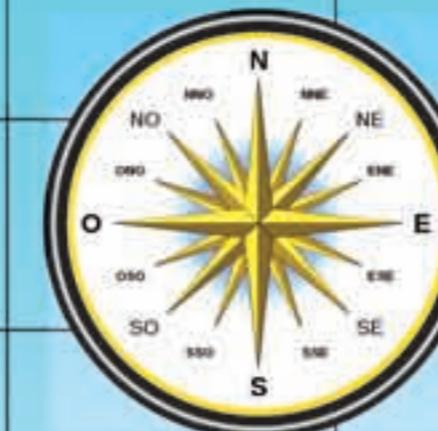
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SPORTS**Aruba TODAY**

The Sequel: Saints and Seahawks meet in playoffs

The Associated Press

After nearly two weeks of waiting, the Seattle Seahawks finally get a chance to prove they were worthy of the No. 1 seed they earned in the NFC. After winning on the road in the first round of the NFL playoffs last week, the New Orleans Saints no longer have that stigma clouding their history. Less than six weeks after Seattle made a resounding claim to NFC supremacy with a rout of New Orleans, the Seahawks and Saints collide again on Saturday in the divisional playoffs. Since that Dec. 2 matchup where the Seahawks all but wrapped up home-field advantage in the NFC playoffs with a 34-7 win, both teams have seen some of their definitions changed. Seattle has lost some of its home invincibility after losing to Arizona on Dec. 22 to end a 14-game home win streak. And the Saints are no longer seeking a validating victory away from New Orleans after knocking off Philadelphia 26-24 last Saturday in an NFC wild-card game, the first road playoff win in team history.

Continued on Page 21



Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Golden Tate (81) and St. Louis Rams cornerback Janoris Jenkins, left, dive for an incomplete pass in the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 29, 2013, in Seattle.

Associated Press



Bode Miller takes fourth place in an alpine ski, men's World Cup downhill training, in Bormio, Italy, Saturday, Dec. 28, 2013.

Associated Press

Bode Miller clear for all Alpine races at Olympics

ADELBODEN, Switzerland

(AP) — Bode Miller has been cleared to race in all five Alpine events at the Sochi Olympics, including defending his super-combined title.

The International Ski Federation clarified its qualification rules after confusion this week about whether some top racers had achieved

enough results.

FIS men's race director Guenter Hujara says Miller's status on the injury list throughout last season was taken into consideration. Miller, who won three medals at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, needed FIS approval to defend his super-combined gold next month.

Hujara says the five-time Olympic medalist is also qualified for giant slalom and slalom.

Miller had already qualified in downhill and super-G, where he won bronze and silver, respectively, four years ago. The 36-year-old American will compete in World Cup GS and slalom races this weekend. □

NHL Roundup

Kings end form slide with win over Bruins

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles' Justin Williams celebrated his 800th game with a power-play goal and an assist to lead the Kings to a 4-2 win over Boston on Thursday, arresting their recent slide.

The win represented a form improvement for the Kings but they made no ground in the Pacific Division, as leader Anaheim edged Nashville and second-placed Anaheim defeated Detroit.

Los Angeles goaltender Jonathan Quick made 20 saves while Jeff Carter, Alec Martinez and captain Dustin Brown also scored for the Kings, who won for just the second time in eight games. Quick has come back well after a 24-game injury absence, allowing just four goals in three games.

Justin Florek scored his first career goal for the Bruins. Anaheim's Teemu Selanne scored the go-ahead goal late in the second period, and the Ducks held on for a 4-3 win over Nashville; their 15th victory in 16 games.

Selanne's fifth goal this season came on the power play at 18:52 of the second, capping a four-goal period for the Ducks. Ryan Getzlaf also scored twice, and Corey Perry added a goal.

Paul Gaustad, Craig Smith and Rich Clune scored a goal each for Nashville.

San Jose's Joe Pavelski scored twice goals to extend his run of strong play and help the Sharks beat Detroit 4-1.

Dan Boyle and Andrew Desjardins also scored for the Sharks.

Tomas Tatar scored for the Red Wings, who began a tough three-game California swing with a loss. Washington's Eric Fehr had two goals, including a tie-breaking redirection with 51.5 seconds left, to give the Capitals a 4-3 win over Tampa Bay.

Tampa Bay had pulled even at 3-3 on Ondrej Palat's nifty tip-in at 14:30 of the third.

Washington also got goals from Mikhail Grabovski and Marcus Johansson.

Tyler Johnson and B.J. Crombeen had the other goals for the Lightning.

Minnesota's Justin Fontaine had a hat trick to power the Wild to a 4-1 victory over Phoenix and their fourth-straight win.

Fontaine scored late in the first period, gave the Wild a two-goal lead on a power play in the third and closed out his first career hat trick with an empty-net goal.

Kyle Brodziak had a goal and an assist, while Niklas Backstrom stopped 39 shots.

Mikkel Boedker scored for the Coyotes.

St. Louis' Jaroslav Halak made 33 saves in a shutout, leading the Blues to their seventh straight victory with a 5-0 win over Calgary.

Carolina's Jordan Staal had a goal and three assists to lead the Hurricanes to a 6-1 rout of Toronto.

New Jersey's Cory Schneider earned his third shutout of the season to give the Devils a 1-0 win over Dallas, ending a run of three-straight wins.

Florida's Brad Boyes scored in regulation and the shootout, lifting the Panthers over Buffalo 2-1. □



Buffalo Sabres left winger Matt Ellis (37) knocks Florida Panthers Dmitry Kulikov (7), of Russia, off his skates as they battle for the puck during the first period of an NHL hockey game in Buffalo, N.Y., Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014.

Associated Press

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NBA Roundup

Nuggets and Knicks win against the odds

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Denver and New York both pulled out wins against the odds on Thursday, continuing their recent form improvements at the expense of Oklahoma City and Miami respectively. Denver's Randy Foye scored a season-high 24 points to steer the Nuggets to a 101-88 win over Oklahoma City, which fell into a tie with Portland for leadership of the Northwest Division.

It was the second straight game that Foye, who hit six 3-pointers, established a season high, having recorded 23 points against Boston on Tuesday.

Evan Fournier had 19 points for Denver, which has won four in a row after losing eight straight prior to that.

Kevin Durant scored 30 points for the Thunder.

New York 102, Miami 102-92

Carmelo Anthony scored 29 points and Andrea Bargnani had 19 for the Knicks, who seized control with a 16-2 run spanning the third and fourth quarters.

New York was second to Miami in the Eastern Conference last season when it won the series 3-1, but there was little reason to suggest the Knicks were ready to compete with the NBA champions this season.

LeBron James scored 32 points for the Heat, who played without injured starters Mario Chalmers and Shane Battier and didn't get much from Chris Bosh, who was held to six points on 3-of-10 shooting. □



Denver Nuggets' J.J. Hickson (7) and Kenneth Faried (35) go up for a rebound against the Oklahoma City Thunder during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game, Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014, in Denver.

Associated Press



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CASINO AND SHOPS

NFL Preview

Continued from Page 18

"They're going to know what to expect from our crowd, they're going to know what to expect from us, and we're going to know what to expect from them," Seattle cornerback Richard Sherman said. "It's almost like a division game in that sense because we've just seen each other and you understand what the game is going to be and what it's going to come down to."

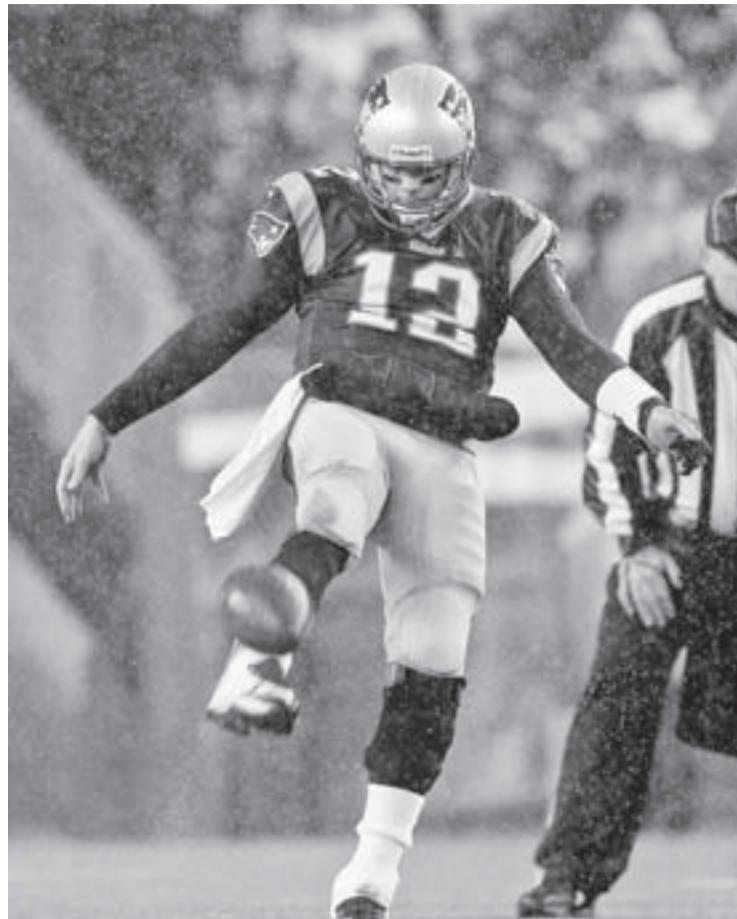
Also on Saturday, the New England Patriots host the Indianapolis Colts, then on Sunday, the Carolina Panthers meet the San Francisco 49ers, and the Denver Broncos face the San Diego Chargers.

The Panthers and Chargers both had road victories in the regular season at their upcoming opponent.

The Patriots and Colts have overcome big deficits this season, but the Colts arrive in Foxborough with the second biggest comeback in NFL postseason history.

They outlasted the Kansas City Chiefs in a wild-card game 45-44 after trailing 38-10 early in the third quarter.

The Colts had other impressive comebacks in the



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady kicks a 32-yard punt on third down during the third quarter of an NFL football game against the Buffalo Bills, Sunday, Dec. 29, 2013, in Foxborough, Mass.

Associated Press

regular season — beating Houston after trailing by 18 in the third quarter and overcoming fourth-quarter deficits to win three other games.

But easing up with a big lead on the Patriots also can be dangerous.

They erased a 24-point half-time deficit to beat Denver in overtime, topped New

Orleans on a touchdown pass with five seconds left and scored two touchdowns in the last 61 seconds to beat Cleveland by one.

Over the last decade, Patriots quarterback Tom Brady has led them to 41 wins in games in which they trailed or were tied in the fourth quarter. Colts

counterpart Andrew Luck has 11 of those, the most by a quarterback in his first two seasons since 1970.

Carolina went to Candlestick Park in November and beat the 49ers 10-9. Both teams are capable of such defensive exploits again.

Carolina won its final seven home games after an opening loss to Seattle. After seeing how 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick wrecked Green Bay last Sunday with his running and passing, the league's second-ranked defense know what it must do.

The Panthers limited him to 91 yards passing, 16 yards rushing and no touchdowns in that one-point road win which defensive end Greg Hardy said "proved we were a contender."

The 49ers are the bookies' one-point favorites, making the Panthers only the third home underdog in the divisional playoffs in the past 20 years.

This is the third straight season San Francisco has been to the playoffs under coach Jim Harbaugh.

The Panthers will make their first playoff appearance since 2008 under third-year coach Ron Rivera. That doesn't seem to bother Rivera.

"No, because two years

ago (the 49ers) didn't have any playoff experience and they did pretty well," Rivera said.

Harbaugh, who was teammates with Rivera with the Chicago Bears, also downplayed the experience factor.

"I've always really felt that where you're going is a heck of a lot more important than where you've come from," he said.

San Diego stunned Denver 27-20 five weeks ago, making Peyton Manning look average and claiming a road victory that was part of a late-season surge that helped sweep the Chargers into the playoffs. Then last Sunday the Chargers put a 27-10 decision on Cincinnati, which had been 8-0 at home this season.

Denver was 7-1, it's only home loss also to the Chargers.

"It's tough to say you're confident knowing what you're going against.

You don't want to take that the wrong way," San Diego's Pro Bowl safety, Eric Weddle, said of the most prolific offense in NFL history, led by Manning.

"Do we believe we can win? Yes. Do we know what a tough challenge it is and how great we have to play? Yeah." □

3 deaths overshadow sixth stage of Dakar Rally



In this Jan. 4, 2014 photo, Belgium's Eric Palante rides on the podium ramp during the symbolic start of the 2014 Argentina-Bolivia-Chile Dakar Rally in Rosario, Argentina.

Associated Press

SALTA, Argentina (AP) — Three deaths overshadowed Friday's sixth leg of the Dakar Rally, as the race claimed the life of Belgian motorcyclist Eric Palante and two spectators who were following the event. Palante's body was found after he failed to finish Thursday's fifth stage.

Nani Roma of Spain kept the overall lead in cars despite finishing sixth in the stage, and fellow Spaniard Marc Coma stayed on top in bikes after taking second on the stage from Tucuman to Salta in northern Argentina.

Roma, driving a Mini, has a large lead of 30 minutes, 30 seconds over Orlando Terranova of Argentina, and 40:54 ahead of 11-time winner Stephane Peterhansel.

Coma leads fellow Spaniard Joan Barreda Bort by 42:17 and is an hour ahead of Alain Duclos of France. Organizers said they went out looking for the 50-year-old Palante after he failed to finish the fifth stage, which most riders completed on Thursday, and found his body along the route.

The cause of death was being investigated, and officials offered few details. This was Palante's 11th Dakar Rally, according to an event biography, which said he would have turned 51 on Jan. 21. It said his goal was to win the amateur trophy for motorbikes. "He knew the race very well, and over the years his enthusiastic but serious approach had made him one of the pillars of the event,"

organizers said in a statement.

Organizers said they received no alert from Palante. Police said two people following the race died on Thursday when their vehicle overturned in rough terrain in northern Argentina. Police identified the pair on Friday as Agustin Ignacio Mina, 19, and Daniel Eduardo Ambrosio, 51. Officials said Mina was covering the rally for a motor racing magazine, and they identified Ambrosio as a fan of motor sports.

The Dakar, raced over rugged terrain in difficult-to-control areas, often produces fatalities. Last year, French motorcyclist Thomas Bourgin was killed in a collision with a Chilean police car. □

Australian Open Preview

Djokovic, Federer bring in the big guns for help

JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer witnessed Andy Murray's drought-breaking successes after he hired Ivan Lendl as coach, and decided they were due for an overhaul of a major kind.

Both took on past Grand Slam champions ahead of the Australian Open, with Djokovic recruiting Boris Becker to help him try to win a fourth straight title in Melbourne and Federer working out a part-time deal with Stefan Edberg.

"It's great to see other legends of the sport coming back and trying to help the active tennis players during their careers," Djokovic said at Friday's draw.

Murray stuck with eight-time major winner Lendl, a partnership that has so far yielded titles at the U.S. Open and Olympics in 2012 and at Wimbledon last year. The No. 1-ranked players haven't yet followed the trend for celebrity coaches.

Rafael Nadal tried some new therapies on his knees in the offseason but otherwise has an unchanged team led by his uncle Toni, who has guided his career since childhood. It was



Defending champions Victoria Azarenka of Belarus and Serbia's Novak Djokovic pose with their trophies prior to the official draw of the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne Australia, Friday, Jan. 10, 2014.

good enough to win him 10 titles last year and regain the No. 1 ranking after a seven-month absence from the tour.

Serena Williams sought a little bit of extra guidance from a tried and trusted source closer to home this time around, spending time in the offseason with her dad, Richard Williams, in Florida to fine-tune parts

of her game.

"My dad has always been, for me, my greatest coach," Williams said. "He knows me better than anybody else."

Before her 2013 season Williams worked out in Mauritius with Patrick Mouratoglou's group. After an upset loss in the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park to Sloane Stephens, she rebounded

Associated Press to win 78 of her 82 matches last season.

After opening 2014 with a successful title defense in Brisbane, with Mouratoglou still in the stands, Williams is confident she can end Victoria Azarenka's two-year reign at Melbourne Park. Even in Brisbane, where she had back-to-back wins over Azarenka and Maria Sharapova, two of her

biggest rivals, Williams was getting pointers long-distance from her dad.

"He knew what I needed to do, he's like 'Serena, you're not doing A, B, and C, this isn't what we worked on.'"

She won't get a chance to play Sharapova and Azarenka back-to-back in Melbourne, with both on the opposite side of the draw. Williams, who hasn't lost a competitive match since August, starts her Australian Open campaign against Australian teenager Ashleigh Barty, and has 2011 U.S. Open champion Sam Stosur and two-time Australian finalist Li Na in her half of the draw.

Critics have questioned whether Williams can this season top her achievements of 2013. She won 11 titles, including two majors, became the oldest player to be No. 1 and spent all but seven weeks atop the rankings.

"I had a similar question in 2012. I had such a good year winning two Slams and a gold ... I just didn't think I could do better," she said. Azarenka has a potential fourth-round match against Stephens, who had an upset win over Serena Williams in the quarterfinals last year. □

Bae grabs early lead at Sony Open

DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

HONOLULU (AP) — Sang-Moon Bae got the better of his playing partner Chris Kirk on Thursday, taking a one-shot lead after the first round of the Sony Open.

Bae made a great start in pristine conditions and shot a 7-under 63, while Kirk made an ideal finish and shot 29 on the back nine to be a stroke back at Waialae Country Club.

Ryan Palmer birdied the last two holes for a 65, tied for third with Brian Stuard who made eight birdies in his round of 65.

Bae and Kirk provided plenty of excitement in one group. They had a better-

ball score of 56. There were only five holes where neither got a birdie.

"He was off to a great start," Kirk said. "At one point he was 4-under and I was still 2-over. It took some catching up for me on the back nine. But it's always nice to see putts falling." Retief Goosen, who missed much of last year with back problems, and John Daly were among seven players at 66.

Zach Johnson, who won the season opener at Kapalua on Monday, opened with two bogeys before he settled into a 68. Jordan Spieth, who finished one shot behind Johnson last week in the Tournament of

Champions, reached 3-under through 10 holes until he was slowed by a three-putt bogey from 20 feet on No. 12. That was the start of three bogeys in four holes and he had to settle for a 70.

Bae opened with a 7-iron to 3 feet on the opening hole, made a 25-footer for birdie on No. 3 and didn't miss a green until the 13th hole. He hit wedge to 15 feet to save par, and picked up his seventh and final birdie on the next hole.

"I missed a lot of putts last week," Bae said. "But this course is more shorter than last week, so easy read, and I can make good speed, too." □



Sang-Moon Bae, of South Korea, tips his cap to the gallery on the ninth green during the first round of the Sony Open golf tournament on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014, in Honolulu.

Associated Press

Carmakers: Driverless cars need legal framework

RYAN NAKASHIMA

AP Business Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Hydrogen- and solar-powered vehicles are on the streets. So are cars that can get you through stop-and-go traffic while you sit back and send texts from behind the wheel. Cars are even using radar, ultrasonic waves and cameras to jump into the passing lane and get around slowpokes. Sure, all of these technologies are still in the testing phase, but that hasn't stopped car makers and technology companies from showing off a new paradigm of driving at the International CES gadget show this week. It's a world in which you no longer grip the wheel with excitement, but instead relax with a book or movie as your car chauffeurs you to your destination.

That was the point of one simulation by Delphi Automotive PLC, a provider of auto parts and technology to major manufacturers including Ford, GM and Volvo. The scenario, using a stationary but souped-up Tesla Model S, imagines "autonomous driving lanes," much like carpool lanes today. The company imagines that vehicles might someday enter these lanes and then run on auto-pilot. The feat is possible today with a mixture of technology that keeps cars inside lanes and adaptive cruise



Induct demonstrates their new Navia driverless shuttle at the International Consumer Electronics Show, Monday, Jan. 6, 2014, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

control that matches a car's speed to the vehicle in front of it.

While in the autonomous lane, the car's window glass frosts up and functions that had been disabled for the driver—like video playing from a mini projector—turn on. The driver can pursue other activities, like surfing the Web or even taking a nap.

When the driver's exit nears, the car gets increasingly persistent, demanding that the driver take back con-

trol. First, the video player stops. Then a female voice intones, "Place both hands on the steering wheel and look ahead in the driving direction."

Finally, the seat starts vibrating and a driver-facing camera ensures he or she is looking at the road. The driver taps a steering wheel knob, takes control, and drives on.

The experience is similar to airline pilots who grab the controls for take-off and landing but let a computer

do the rest.

"These technologies exist now and the carmakers assure us they're ready to go," said Jim Travers, associate editor of autos for Consumer Reports magazine. "It's really not that far off."

Though technological innovation isn't an issue, there are many speed bumps on the road to this envisioned future. Consumers must accept the safety and reliability of such systems, governments must draft and

pass legislation and the insurance industry needs to draw up guidelines to answer tricky questions such as who'd be at fault in the event of a crash.

"That's one of the biggest issues for the industry as a whole for autonomous technology," said Glen De Vos, vice president of engineering for Delphi's electronics and safety division. "The legal environment has to keep pace. Today we're at the very beginning." □

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Target:

Data breach caught up to 70M customers

NEW YORK (AP) — Retail chain Target said Friday that personal information — including phone numbers and email and mailing addresses — was stolen from as many as 70 million customers in its pre-Christmas data breach. That was substantially more customers than Target had previously said were affected. The chain also indicated its sales have been hurt by the breach, cutting its forecast for fourth-quarter earnings and a key sales barometer. Target Corp. announced in December that about 40 million credit and debit cards may have been affected by a data

breach that happened between Nov. 27 and Dec. 15 — just as the holiday shopping season was getting into gear. But the net has now been cast wider, with more shoppers potentially impacted.

The company told customers Friday that its investigation of the breach has shown that personal information had also been stolen and more customers were affected.

"I know that it is frustrating for our guests to learn that this information was taken and we are truly sorry they are having to endure this," Chairman, President and CEO Gregg Steinhafel said

in a statement. The company said customers won't be liable for the cost of any fraudulent charges that stemmed from the breach.

It's also offering a year of free credit monitoring and identity theft protection to customers that shopped at its stores. Individuals will have three months to enroll in the program, which Target said it will provide more details next week. Target lowered its fourth-quarter adjusted earnings guidance to a range of \$1.20 to \$1.30 per share, down from \$1.50 to \$1.60 per share.

Analysts surveyed by Fact-

Set expect earnings of \$1.24 per share.

The Minneapolis company also said that it now foresees fourth-quarter sales at stores open at least a year will be down about 2.5 percent. It previously predicted those sales would be about flat.

Target cautioned that its fourth-quarter financials may include charges related to the data breach. The chain said the costs tied to the breach may have a material adverse effect on its quarterly results as well as future periods.

Shares of Target declined 84 cents to \$62.50 before the market open. □

Sears' sales fell 9.2% in tepid holiday season

ELIZABETH A. HARRIS

© 2014 New York Times

Sears Holdings Corp. released bleak holiday sales figures this week, as year-end reports and company data from other retailers painted a disappointing picture of the overall season, with little growth over the year before.

Sears stock plummeted more than 13 percent in after-hours trading Thursday evening, after an announcement disclosed that sales at its Sears stores in the United States dropped 9.2 percent during the nine-week period that ended Jan. 4. Sales at Kmart stores that have been open at least a year fell 5.7 percent during the same period.

"The results that we posted are not nearly what we want them to be," Edward S. Lampert, chief executive of Sears, said in a company blog. "They also overshadow all of the work that's being done by our associates, our vendors and the other businesses we work with, along with everyone who is developing better ways for us to serve our members."

The company has been struggling to retain its core customer base and had announced that it would spin off its auto centers and its in-store Lands' End sections. For retailers more broadly, little hard data had been released before this week that gave an overall picture of the 2013 holiday season. Now it appears the season was lackluster for many retailers, occasionally even grim.

Analysts warned that even where the sales numbers were decent, this season's extraordinarily aggressive discounting had most likely taken a bite out of stores' profit margins.

"I would categorize it as a season most retailers would prefer to forget about," said Ken Perkins, founder of Retail Metrics. In contrast to improving employment, a rising stock market and increasing home values, he said, "it was a tough holiday season." □

Stocks rise as investors dismiss job report

KEN SWEET

AP Markets Reporter

NEW YORK (AP) — It was a fluke. That was the conclusion investors reached about the U.S. government's latest jobs report, which showed a sharp decline in hiring last month. Stock indexes ended mostly higher after wavering for much of the day.

The gains were minuscule, however, and there were a number of signs that investors were being cautious. Prices rose for bonds and gold, traditional "go-to" assets for nervous investors. Utilities and other kinds of low-risk, high-dividend stocks also rose as investors sought safe places to park money.

"We need to see more evidence before concluding that all the other (economic) indicators are wrong and the jobs data is correct," said Kate Warne, a market strategist with Edward Jones.

The Dow Jones Industrial average fell 7.71 points, or less than 0.1 percent, to 16,437.05. If not for a slump in Chevron, which reported a decline in oil and gas production late Thursday, the index would have risen slightly.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 4.24 points, or 0.2 percent, to 1,842.37

and the Nasdaq composite rose 18.47 points, or 0.4 percent, to 4,174.66.

The Labor Department said that only 74,000 jobs were added to payrolls in December, the fewest in three years and far less than economists were expecting. The unemploy-

panies are selling record levels of goods overseas; Americans are buying more big items like cars and appliances and layoffs have dwindled. As recently as Wednesday, the payroll processor ADP said private business created 238,000 jobs in December.

bond trading at ED&F Man Capital.

Market strategists blamed the bad jobs data on everything from the unseasonably cold weather in December to the fact that Thanksgiving in late November came later than usual. Few believed the economic recovery is slowing down.

Cautious investors took the data as a reason to retreat into safer investments. Bond prices rose, sending yields lower. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.87 percent from 2.97 percent the day before.

Utility stocks were among the biggest gainers as investors looked to pull back on risk.

The Dow Jones utility average, a basket of 15 utility companies, rose 1.3 percent. Consolidated Edison, Pacific Gas & Electric, and Edison International were all up roughly 1 percent or more.

Even gold prices went up, after having a difficult 2013. Gold rose \$17.50, or 1.4 percent, to \$1,246.90 an ounce on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

With Wall Street treating the December jobs data as an aberration, the place investors will look next for guidance will be corporate earnings. □



Dr. George Shapiro, former NY Giants Ottis Anderson, Harry Carson and Carl Nelson, with Dr. Peter Ferraro and former NY Jets Bruce Harper, left to right, celebrate the NFL Alumni Optimal Bowl & Wellness Challenge during closing bell ceremonies at the New York Stock Exchange Friday, Jan. 10, 2014. The Optimal Bowl and Wellness Challenge is a health and wellness competition designed to educate the general public about health and a charitable endeavor supporting youth oriented charities of the NFL Alumni.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

ment rate fell, but mostly because many Americans stopped looking for work, the government said.

The December jobs data stands in contrast to a weeks of reports consistent with a steadily strengthening economy. U.S. com-

If the recent U.S. economic picture were a jigsaw puzzle, the jobs report is the piece that didn't fit.

"The investor base was completely shocked with how especially weak the numbers were," said Tom Galoma, who heads up

Philip Morris Int'l building plants in Italy

M. FELBERBAUM
AP Tobacco Writer
RICHMOND, Virginia (AP) — Overseas Marlboro maker Philip Morris International Inc. said Friday it is investing up to 500 million euros (about \$680 million) for two plants in Italy to make new tobacco products.

The world's second-biggest cigarette seller behind state-controlled China National Tobacco Corp. said the facilities near Bologna will produce its so-called "reduced-risk" products that heat tobacco instead of burning it. Companies are venturing into smokeless tobacco and other nicotine products to diversify beyond the declining traditional cigarette business as tax increases, health concerns, smoking bans and stigma cut into demand. Philip Morris International said the pilot plant will make products for testing and market launches, and is nearing completion. Construction of a larger plant is expected to begin immediately and last about two years. Once finished, it will employ up to 600 people.

The company, based in New York and Switzerland, said it expects annual production to reach up to 30 billion units by 2016.

Philip Morris International is developing products that heat tobacco in a cigarette with a controlled heating mechanism or an aerosol nicotine-delivery system. While two of the technologies heat tobacco instead of burning it, one uses an electronic heater and the other uses a carbon heat source. It plans to pilot test its next-generation products later this year and launch a product that heats tobacco instead of burning it in 2015.

"The development and commercialization of reduced-risk products represents a significant step toward achieving the public health objective of harm reduction (and) a potential paradigm shift for the industry." □

PepsiCo's premium water to make its debut

CANDICE CHOI
AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If you're willing to pay a little extra for trendy bottled water, there's Evian, Smartwater and Fiji. Now, PepsiCo wants to throw "Qua" to the mix.

The world's No. 2 beverage company plans to gauge response to its first premium bottled water brand at the Golden Globes this weekend. The bottles will be passed out on the red carpet and placed on tables at the show, a way for the company to introduce it to the Hollywood types who appeal to its target audience.

A PepsiCo spokeswoman noted that the company is still working out the kinks and that the name and design for Qua may change before it's rolled out more broadly.

Aside from their higher prices, what exactly sets a premium water brand apart varies. But the superficial factor is high: they usually come in stylish bottles. The water's sourcing or filtering may also be touted on labels.

As with Coca-Cola's

Smartwater, Qua is made with tap water. The brand, which PepsiCo says is "micro-filtered" and free of sodium, is slated to be tested regionally in California this summer before expanding

Cola and PepsiCo, which are struggling to sell more soda. Since hitting a peak in 1998, U.S. soda consumption has been on a downward trend, and declines have accelerated in



PepsiCo is introducing its first premium bottled water at the Golden Globes Sunday, Jan. 12, which comes after the success of Coca-Cola's Smartwater. The company says the name and design for Qua's bottle may change before it's rolled out more broadly.

(AP Photo/PepsiCo)

to other markets.

Bottled waters have surged in popularity over the years and represent an important opportunity for Coca-

recent years.

The problem with run-of-the-mill bottled waters, however, is that people tend to just buy what-

ever's cheapest. Coke's Dasani and Pepsi's Aquafina, for example, don't exactly have sexy images that make people willing to pay more for them. So the companies are focusing on brands they can market as being premium, thus commanding higher prices.

PepsiCo, which is based in Purchase, New York, says it hasn't yet determined pricing for the water. But competing brands can sell for \$2 a bottle or more.

The company's entry into the premium water segment comes well after rival Coca-Cola bought Smartwater in 2007. For the first half of last year, Smartwater's sales volume rose 16 percent, according to the industry tracker Beverage Digest.

"Coke's Smartwater is growing very strongly and is becoming a real asset to Coke and its bottlers," said John Sicher, publisher of Beverage Digest.

The publication had reported this summer on PepsiCo's plans to enter the premium water category, noting that the drink would likely be called "Om." □

US economy adds scant 74K jobs in December

C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The weakest month of hiring in three years ended 2013 on a sluggish note and raised questions about whether the U.S. job market can sustain its recent strong gains. Employers added a scant 74,000 jobs in December after averaging 214,000 in the previous four months. Economists cautioned that cold weather likely played a role in the sharp slowdown. Many analysts said they would need to see more data before they could tell whether the job market had lost momentum.

The Labor Department said Friday that the unemployment rate fell from 7 percent in November to 6.7 percent, its lowest level since October 2008. But the drop occurred mostly

because many Americans stopped looking for jobs. Once people without jobs stop looking for one, the government no longer counts them as unemployed.

The proportion of people either working or looking for work fell to 62.8 percent, matching a nearly 36-year low. Last month's expiration of extended unemployment benefits for 1.3 million long-term unemployed could accelerate that trend if many of them stop looking for work. Beneficiaries had been required to look for work to receive unemployment checks.

The stock market edged lower.

The Dow Jones industrial average was down 27 points in afternoon trading. And the yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.88 percent from 2.97 late

Thursday — a drop that is normally a sign of a slowing economy.

It's unclear whether the sharp hiring slowdown might lead the Federal Reserve to rethink its plan to slow its stimulus efforts. The Fed decided last month to pare its monthly bond purchases, which have been designed to lower interest rates to spur borrowing and spending.

"I don't think the Fed is going to be panicked by this," said Joel Naroff, president of Naroff Economic Advisors.

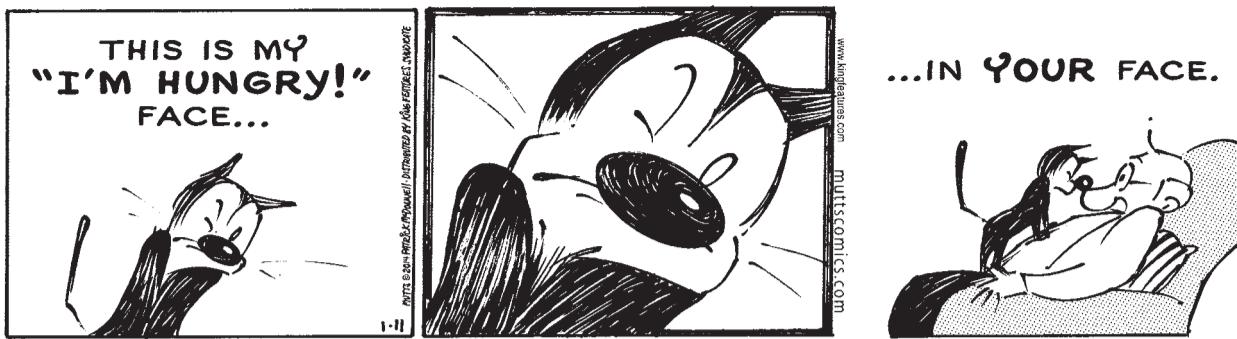
Naroff suggested that the 6.7 percent unemployment rate — a drop of more than a full percentage point since 2013 began — will eventually lead many employers to raise wages.

"It doesn't change what they're thinking," Naroff said of the Fed.

Many economists said it would be premature to conclude from Friday's report that the economy is weakening. "We stop short of making larger observations based on this number," said Dan Greenhaus, chief global strategist at brokerage firm BTIG. "The economy, based on any number of other indicators, has been picking up steam of late which makes today's number ... curious." Unusually cold weather might have slowed hiring in December. Construction companies, which are heavily dependent on weather conditions, cut 16,000 jobs, the biggest drop in 20 months.

Michael Hanson, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, estimated that the cold weather lowered hiring by about 75,000 jobs. □

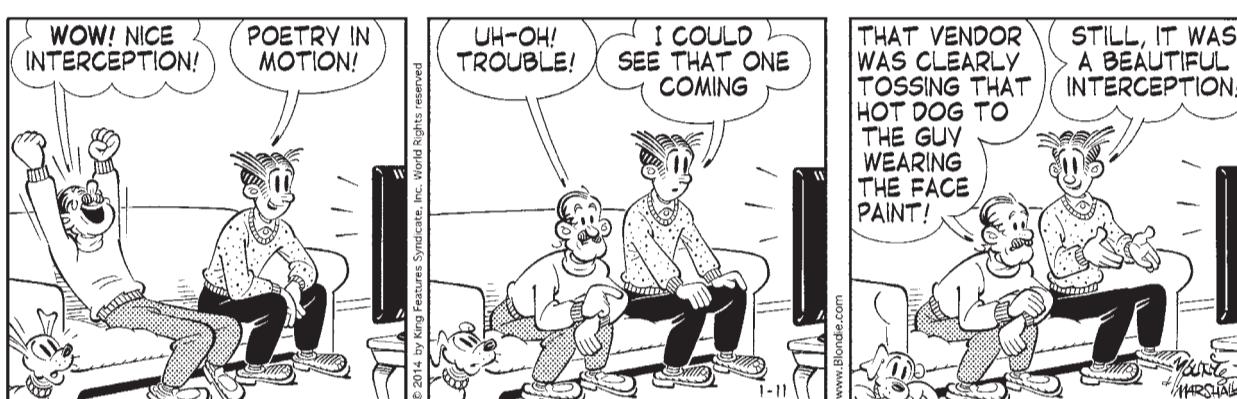
Mutts



6 Chix



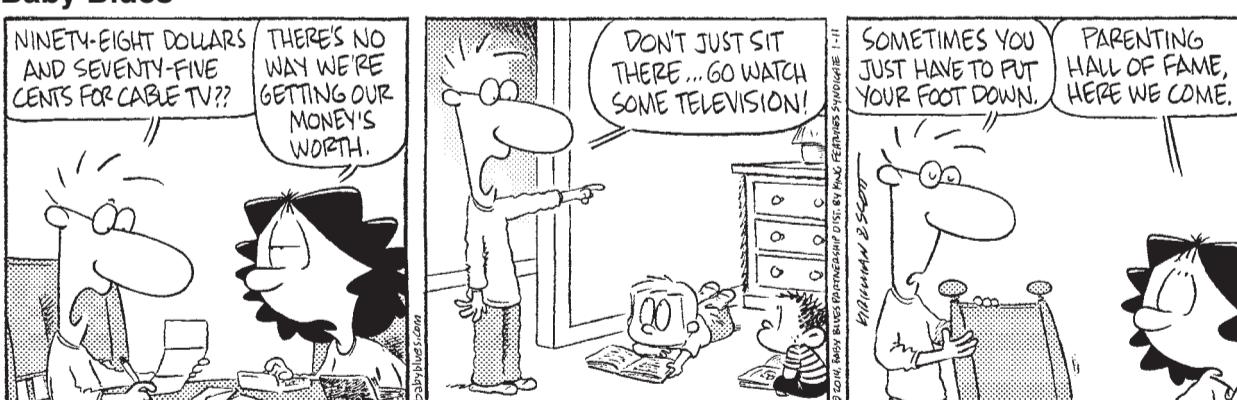
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	3		4		9			
7		3		2				
8		9			1			
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6					2			
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	1		2			4		
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Difficulty Level ★★★★

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4	8	9	2	6	7	5	1	3
5	3	7	9	8	1	2	6	4
2	1	6	5	3	4	7	9	8
1	4	2	6	7	5	3	8	9
3	9	5	8	1	2	4	7	6
6	7	8	3	4	9	1	2	5
7	5	3	1	9	8	6	4	2
9	2	4	7	5	6	8	3	1
8	6	1	4	2	3	9	5	7

Yesterday's puzzle answer

1/11/14

ACROSS

1 Greek "T"
4 Helped
9 CAT or MRI
13 Bump __; meet unexpectedly
15 Tomb
16 Vagrant
17 Within walking distance
18 Acting parts
19 Lubricates
20 Peroxides and bleaches
22 Delight
23 Charges
24 Large bird that cannot fly
26 Negligent
29 Deserted
34 Standing up
35 Blackboard
36 Frothy drink
37 Ice cream scoop holder
38 Looks for
39 Stuff into a tight space
40 Find a sum
41 Mold; form
42 Game that is often state-run
43 Most irksome
45 Opposite of "improve"
46 Lyricist __ Gershwin
47 Conceited
48 Autumn
51 Becoming a member of again
56 Wicked
57 Rejoice
58 __ in; absorb
60 Heavy book
61 Stove
62 Enormous
63 Water jug
64 Vilify to ruin the reputation of
65 Old horse

DOWN

1 Cheap metal
2 Afresh
3 "Beehive State"
4 Concurs
5 Actor Jeremy
6 Valley
7 Hardly __; infrequently
8 Baked Alaska & crème brûlée
9 Old Japanese military ruler
10 Bedspring, e.g.
11 Competent
12 Schnoz
14 Bodily opening, like the mouth
21 Lab trial
25 Name with Ginnie or Fannie
26 Summary
27 Wear away
28 Repairs
29 Snoozed
30 __ off; leave
31 Pub game
32 Make joyous
33 Speed __; one who drives fast
35 Caribbean and Mediterranean
38 Sheep clippers
39 Rock __ hens; small chickens
41 Man's title
42 Cut of pork
44 Assassin
45 Café employee
47 Longest river in Europe
48 Celebration
49 Declare openly
50 Green citrus
52 SAT, for one
53 Sixth month
54 Person, place or thing
55 Entertainer
Lady __
59 Beer barrel

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13		14	15						16		
17			18						19		
20		21	22						23	24	25
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34			35						36		
37		38			39				40		
40		41							42		
43		44							45		
46			47						48		
48	49	50	51	52	53				54	55	
56			57						58		
60			61						62		
63			64						65		

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

1/11/14

Friday's Puzzle Solved

T	U	T	O	R	I	D	E	A	M	N	E
A	S	I	D	E	N	E	A	O	D	O	R
M	E	N	D	S	L	A	R	D	L	A	I
E	S	T	E	E	M	E	D	E	L	A	P
K	N	O	T	T	S	M	O	S	E	S	E
N	O	V	S	T	O	A	T	S	E	A	M
E	V	E	R	Y	A	L	T	A	S	P	I
W	A	R	E	S	R	E	D	S	E	L	I
W	A	T	E	R	E	D	I	R	E	S	S
A	B	E	R	I	A	L	A	B	D	O	R
D	O	P	E	R	A	I	D	A	M	I	G
E	E	V	E	E	Y	E	D	T	R	E	R
N	E	E	D	D	E	N	Y	E	E	N	R

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1/11/14

Dwyer Column: Christie's apologies for the sins of his aides leaves out his own

JIM DWYER

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Another 900 pages of documents on the George Washington Bridge Toll-gate-Gate are due to be published as soon as Friday, and early word is what they lack in punchiness - after all, what could top "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee"? - they make up for in venom.

In particular, Gov. Chris Christie's close friend, David Samson, chairman of the Port Authority, is quoted complaining in foul language about another official whom he believed was leaking to a newspaper.

And the documents are also said to show people in the governor's office helping an ally at the Port Authority figure out how to pretend that the purposeful creation of traffic jams was something other than political retribution.

This is a bit off-topic, but the Super Bowl is going to be played in New Jersey next month, and the official New York-New Jersey Super Bowl webpage features a very handsome drawing of the George Washington Bridge itself, with advice on best routes to the game. (Alas, it does not warn people away from the Fort Lee approaches to the bridge.)

One wonders: Who will be seated with Christie at the stadium in the Meadowlands? Samson, whose law firm represents Triple Five, the developer of the shopping malls at the Meadowlands?

But enough about the future.

The governor held a news conference Thursday to say an extended act of contrition, though it was entirely for the sins of others. In nearly two hours, Christie never got around to mentioning any of his own.

Instead, as he exfoliated - he was blindsided, he was going through the stages of grief, how could he be betrayed like this, and on and on like that - he casually dropped a few loopholes into his spiel.

Such as, sure, it seemed like closing the traffic lanes at the George Washington Bridge was intended to create misery for the "little Serbian" (which is how one of the governor's cronies referred in an email to the mayor of Fort Lee, who is actually of Croatian ancestry; the Christie administration apparently is the Gang that Couldn't Slur Straight). But maybe, Christie said, there really was a legitimate traffic study underway.

"And let's be fair," Christie said. "There are times when there have been investigations around here that led to nothing and have had no basis."

Well, yes, that's a topic he knows about.

Nevertheless, word of the subpoena was leaked out by the federal prosecutors, and Christie's investigation was used by Kean throughout the campaign to hammer at Menendez.

In time, the case was transferred to federal prosecutors in Pennsylvania, who closed the matter without bringing any charges.

Christie must be hoping that the various investigations into the abuse of authority at the bridge will come to the same end. But it may be a while. Or it may be never.

In the meantime, he filibustered through a news conference about the events, mentioning a number of times where he was when he learned about the damning emails issued from his aides (just finished working out; the trainer had just left) and that he really did not know the political crony who went to his high school and who organized the traffic bomb on Fort Lee (I was the school president, and I was an athlete, and I don't know what circles he was in).

So why, he was asked, did his close allies think it was OK to pull a stunt like this? "There's a lot of soul searching that goes on around this," Christie said. Happy hunting. □

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Violence Against Women

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STA. CRUZ	585-4710
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SAN NICOLAS	584-5000
FIRE DEPT.	115
FIRE DEPT.	582-1108
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PROF. TAXI	588-0035
TAXI D.T.S.	587-2300
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Jan. 11

Coral Princess

Jan. 12

Mein Schiff 2

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Women in Difficulties

Foundation

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Bloodbank Aruba

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Fast-moving erosion threatens Hawaii coastal homes

By AUDREY McAVOY

Associated Press

HALEIWA, Hawaii (AP)

-- Alice Lunt didn't worry too much when she saw waves splashing close to her home on Oahu's North Shore on Christmas Eve. She had seen the ocean edge close before. But before dawn, a neighbor woke her with a call.

"Everything was washing away," she remembered the neighbor saying.

The water claimed Lunt's deck that day, and washed away a concrete slab the next night - part of a fast-moving collapse of the shore that also ripped out a neighbor's backyard and forced another to cut away rooms to save the rest of their house.

The Christmas swell damaged at least five ocean-front properties in the neighborhood, rekindling a decades-old debate about how best the state and homeowners should respond to beach erosion and the increasingly rising waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Some property owners want to be able to install a seawall or something similar to protect their property. Doing so, scientists say, could lead the sand on the nearby coastline - including Sunset Beach, home to some of the world's top surfing contests - to disappear.

"Do you build a seawall and potentially condemn the beach to extinction in front of the seawall but at the same time buy a lot of time for homeowners on the nearby land to figure out how to move away from that situation?" asked Chip Fletcher, a University of Hawaii coastal geologist.

"Or do you not build a seawall, condemning the homes and the developed land to extinction, but allow the beach to survive?" Fletcher said building seawalls always comes to mind wherever severe erosion occurs.

He said studies show seawalls built on chronically eroding shorelines like Sunset Beach will only lead



Sandbags are piled up in front of a house damaged by severe beach erosion in the Rocky Point neighborhood of Oahu's North Shore in Haleiwa, Hawaii on Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2013.

Associated Press

to more erosion down the coast.

Fletcher noted that other Oahu communities have already lost large chunks of beach because of seawalls.

These are stark options for Sunset Beach, where multimillion-dollar homes line the shore and where the globe's top surfers converge each year for the World Cup of Surfing.

Property owners wanting to build a seawall would need to draft an environmental study and get a state permit, a process that could take months.

In the short-term, they may receive emergency authorization to place sandbags and tarp in front of their properties to deflect the waves, said Sam Lemmo, the coastal lands office administrator.

Krystle Dombrowski, whose family owns two houses next to Lunt's that they rent to vacationers, her husband, Kenneth, some friends and volunteers ran out of burlap sacks and had to buy all the pillowcases at Wal-Mart and made bright orange, red



and polka dot sandbags.

"We need something that's structurally sound, something that is really big, that can help us," she said.

Large surf that regularly hits the North Shore each winter brought the Christmas swell, not a freak storm.

Lunt said the beach fronting her home was particularly narrow because swells from the north that usually deposit sand during the

summer weren't as frequent and westerly swells had taken away sand instead. West and northwest swells have continued to carry away sand this winter, she said.

But more fundamental factors are also at play. One is that sea levels have been rising for years, pushing the ocean inland. Another is that the Sunset coastline is chronically eroding, just like 70 percent of the beaches on Oahu, Maui and Kauai islands.

In the long term, both Lemmo and Fletcher believe government agencies should encourage people to move away from the coast to eliminate the question of whether seawalls should be built.

"We need to accommodate the erosion, allow it to occur, and we need to move away from it so it doesn't affect our lives," Lemmo said.

One option would be for a land conservation fund to

of the erosion creeping up on their coastlines.

But even this may not be far enough, Fletcher said, noting these setbacks still allow buildings right on the sand dunes.

Construction may need to be 150 feet from the shoreline to get away from the dunes, he said.

Rocky Point homes, like many of Hawaii's coastal homes, were built on dunes that would now be feeding the beach with sand if they didn't have structures on them.

The two-mile stretch of coastline from Sunset Point to Pupukea Beach Park was subdivided in the 1920s, according to "Beaches of Oahu" by John R. K. Clark. That was a time when scientists didn't know as much about sand dunes.

The outlines of dunes are still visible in the rise and fall of pavement on the narrow road next to Lunt's home. Erosion like this will likely recur, Fletcher said, as sea

levels rise and as climate change causes sea levels to rise even faster. This is especially true, he said, in places where sand dunes have been landscaped out of existence or are locked up by development.

"The event on the North Shore is a warning for all of us in Hawaii that these sorts of occurrences are part of our future," he said. □

'Girls' producers take on nudity, diversity issues

LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer
PASADENA, California

(AP) — The nudity in HBO's "Girls" has raised eyebrows. A question about it has raised the anger of the show's producers.

At a Thursday session with the Television Critics Association to promote the comedy's new season, a reporter asked Lena Dunham, the show's creator, executive producer and star, why her character was so often naked and for no apparent reason.

"It's because it's a realistic expression of what it's like to be alive, I think, and I totally get it," Dunham replied. "If you are not into me, that's your problem, and you are going to have to kind of work that out."

Filmmaker Judd Apatow (the "Anchorman" movies, "The 40-Year-Old Virgin"), an executive producer of the show about 20-something friends, asked the

reporter if he had a girlfriend and suggesting she wouldn't appreciate his question. At another point, producer Jenni Konner said she was in a "rage spiral" over what she characterized as an inappropriate accusation that a woman was "showing her body too much." The responses were less heated when the producers fielded questions about the show's lack of a regular minority character, despite its setting in diverse New York City.

"I don't think that there's any reason why any show should feel an obligation to do that," Apatow replied.

"In the history of television, you could look at every show on TV and say, 'How come there's not an American Indian on this show?' 'How come there's not an Asian person on this show?'" he said. "It really has to come from the story and the stories that we are trying to tell." Konner said



From left, Lena Dunham, Jemima Kirke, Zosia Mamet, and Allison Williams on stage during the Girls panel discussion at the HBO portion of the 2014 Winter Television Critics Association tour at the Langham Hotel on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014 in Pasadena, Calif. **Associated Press**

producers are trying to address some of the criticism that they agreed with, and Dunham called the conversation one "that needs to happen in the world."

"We need to talk about di-

versifying the world of television, and we are trying to continue to do it in ways that are genuine, natural, intelligent. But we heard all of that and hadn't really felt it deeply," she said.

"Girls," which also stars Jemima Kirke, Zosia Mamet, and Allison Williams, returns Sunday for its third season. HBO said Thursday it has ordered a fourth season. □

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood! Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "from the pier to your plate!"



ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fisherman of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad. Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweaver has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words :fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on 12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm.



Winners of Int'l. LUHRS Marina Group Blue Marlin Release Tournament 2009



Catch your own dinner

A charter includes: captain, mate all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included.

You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com

Driftwood Restaurant. This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their

extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95. **Charter deep sea fishing rates:** \$400 - 1/2 day • \$760 - full day. Rates per boat Max. 6 people. **Driftwood Restaurant** Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat #12, Downtown Oranjestad. Tel: (297) 583 2515 www.driftwoodaruba.com Open hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm. Sunday Closed.

All-star cast takes on AIDS TV drama

LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

PASADENA, California (AP)

— Producer Ryan Murphy said it was "sort of thrilling" to feature openly gay leading men Matt Bomer and Jim Parsons in an AIDS TV drama.

Murphy said social attitudes toward gays have changed a great deal even in the five years he's been working on the project, "The Normal Heart." But he didn't seek out any actors for the drama based on their sexuality, only on their skill, said the producer of "Glee" and "American Horror Story."

Bomer stars in USA's crime caper "White Collar" series, and Parsons is the Emmy



Julia Roberts speaks on stage during the Normal Hearts panel discussion at the HBO portion of the 2014 Winter Television Critics Association tour at the Langham Hotel on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2014 in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

Award-winning star of "The Big Bang Theory." The HBO film, adapted from Larry Kramer's 1985 play about the early years of the AIDS crisis, also stars Mark Ruffalo, Julia Roberts and Taylor Kitsch.

In a Q&A session Thursday with the Television Critics Association, Roberts wryly brushed a question about her "very unglamorous" role as a paraplegic doctor researching the AIDS virus.

Said the "Pretty Woman" star: "It's funny when a girl just looks like a person, you're unglamorous," adding, "I'm just saying."

"The Normal Heart" debuts this spring on HBO.

Amy Poehler: 'SNL' hiring Sasheer Zamata 'awesome'

PASADENA, California

(AP) — "Saturday Night Live" alumna Amy Poehler says her old show's hire of young comic Sasheer Zamata is awesome.

Zamata and two new writers were hired at NBC's longtime comedy show last week. All are black, with the show responding to criticism that it needed more diversity in its creative staff.

Poehler takes particular



In this Oct. 13, 2013 file photo, Amy Poehler, a cast member in "Free Birds," poses for photographers at the world premiere of "Free Birds" at the Regency Village Theater, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

pride. She's a co-founder of New York's Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, and says that Zamata was brought in as part of that improv group's own effort to promote diversity.

Poehler is preparing for Sunday's job co-hosting the Golden Globes with Tina Fey, which she said she's anticipating with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. □

In Marvel's Ultimate universe, fate looms large

MATT MOORE

Associated Press

It's the end of the world for Marvel's Ultimate universe, but it's a beginning, too. Fourteen years after its creation by Marvel Entertainment as a modern, grittier and contemporary take on Marvel's characters, the publisher is pushing forward with new efforts to reinvigorate its universe where the dead remain so and disaster, discord and — ultimately — redemption and rebirth are among the events that keep readers coming back issue after issue.

What it means for characters like Miles Morales; members of the FF (Future Foundation, not Fantastic Four); and the All New Ultimates, including Black Widow, Kitty Pryde, Bombshell and Cloak and Dagger, will unfold beginning in April as the events of the soon-to-end "Cataclysm" mini-series runs its course.

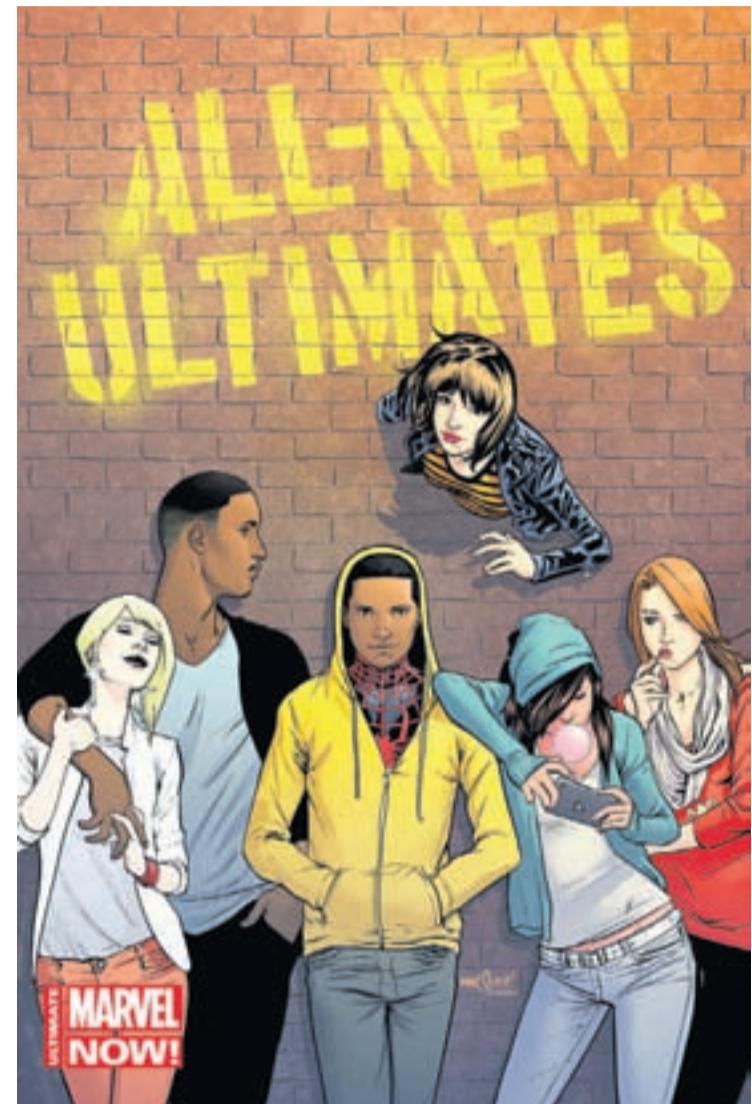
Writer Brian Michael Bendis is tight-lipped about the end but said this week that it ends with great cost.

"They're able to win the day, but at great sacrifice, a sacrifice that is so huge that it changes the entire landscape," said Bendis. "It creates a place that demands a fresh start from everyone who surveys it."

The move is part of Marvel Entertainment's relaunching of its Ultimate universe that starts in April under the banner Ultimate Marvel NOW! Editor-in-chief Axel Alonso called it the opportunity to tear down the existing universe to make it better. "Once again, we're destroying something and building something new, but there's an end game in sight," he said of the move, noting that Marvel's so-called Ultimate universe has always been noted by readers, writers and artists and editors for its "elasticity" and experimentation.

"We created the line to take chances," he said.

"Dead is dead," he said, so don't expect any miraculous resurrections.



This image provided by Marvel Entertainment shows cover art by David Marquez for an issue of "All-New Ultimates."

Associated Press

"The long and short of it is this: The Ultimate (universe) benefits from a good, old kick in the butt."

"If you've been following Brian Bendis and David Marquez's 'Ultimate Comics Spider-Man,' you know that Miles Morales has had to grow up fast," said editor Mark Paniccia. "In 'All-New Ultimates,' we'll see this eclectic group of super-powered teens step up, live fast and maybe even die hard" in the new series written by Michel Fiffe and drawn by Amilcar Pinna.

Bendis said Morales, who took up the Spider-Man mantle after the death of Peter Parker, is among those characters who finds himself in new territory, too.

"You can look at this as kind of his Bar Mitzvah of sorts and, now, he has to take the reins of Spider-Man under the new world he finds himself in," he said of the upcoming "Miles Morales: Ultimate Spider-Man" series

drawn by Marquez.

"His entire life as a human being has changed."

For others, the change is going to be rapid, and unexpected, said Joshua Hale Fialkov, writer of "Ultimate FF," a team book drawn by Mario Guevara focusing on several core members that make up the Future Foundation.

"It's a team of geniuses, four of the smartest people in the Ultimate universe," he said, of the core that includes Sue Storm and Tony Stark, among others. "And we're missing one, and that one happens to be a psychopath."

Fialkov called the titles an opportunity for Marvel and readers. "We have a pretty big responsibility with this universe. No. 1., it has been a gateway for people back into films and we want to be innovative, doing things different with these characters that you cannot get anywhere else."

Beautifying Abbey Road



MAUREEN DOWD

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In real life, Americans may keen about income inequality. But on TV, they're keen for it.

"Downton Abbey" continued its upward ascent with viewers Sunday night, a gushing embrace of class snobbery that hasn't been seen since friends clustered across the country in 1981 - wearing black tie and clutching Teddy Bears and champagne glasses - to watch "Brideshead Revisited."

I've resisted the "Downton Abbey" fervor. My grandmother and her nine sisters were tall, strapping women who immigrated to America from Ireland in the second decade of the 20th century and found jobs as maids, cooks and nannies for rich families with names like Gore and Mellon. So heaven forfend that I would enjoy watching Lord Grantham erupt in horror when his youngest daughter wants to marry the cute Irish chauffeur.

At the start of the fourth season, Maggie Smith's caustic Dowager Countess still can't stomach calling the Irishman by his first name, even now that the widowed Tom Branson is the estate manager and father of her great-granddaughter (dubbed a wicked "crossbreed" by the nanny.) As my great-aunts worked tirelessly to grasp shards of the American dream, they were not gliding about mansions playing confidantes to malleable employers, much less co-conspirators in moving the bodies of dead lovers. It was a much tougher life than the democratized fantasy shown in "Downton Abbey."

Sure, Julian Fellowes' servants have to iron the newspapers, choose cuff links and scan for scratches in the silver candelabra, but basically the upstairs-downstairs hierarchies work in contented concert, mingling like family - warmly and sometimes spitefully. Just as there is a yawning gulf between "Gone With the Wind" and the harrowing "12 Years a Slave," there is a yawning gulf between the Panglossian PBS soap opera of manners and the dehumanizing life most servants led. In "Castle Rackrent," an 1800 work that was a pioneer of the historical novel, Maria Edgeworth skewered her own British landlord class for viciousness to the Irish peasantry. Speaking of the grand lady of the house, Edgeworth wrote: "She was a strict observer, for self and servants, of Lent, and all fast-days, but not holidays. One of the maids having fainted

three times the last day of Lent, to keep soul and body together, we put a morsel of roast beef in her mouth, which came from Sir Murtagh's dinner, who never fasted, not he; but somehow or other it unfortunately reached my lady's ears, and the priest of the parish had a complaint made of it the next day, and the poor girl was forced, as soon as she could walk, to do penance for it, before she could get any peace or absolution, in the house or out of it."

Niall O'Dowd, the founder of The Irish Voice, IrishCentral.com and Irish America magazine, asserted: "For this generation of Americans, the 'Downton Abbey' 'Yes, m'lady' servants are the equivalent to the old minstrel shows on the Bowery. It reflects the colonial cringe, casting an ameliorating light over a period that was full of pretty desperate stuff for people trapped in a rigid, notorious caste system."

Americans cast off the British monarchy, but they go nuts for Kate Middleton's procreation story. ("Rich woman has baby," O'Dowd notes dryly.) And they savor watching a Downton aristocrat dress down a servant for noting inelegantly, "Dinner is on the table."

We believe in upward mobility. Yet some of the new American moguls are taking on the worst traits of the old British class system: Silicon Valley's up-and-coming tech titans who complain about having to look at the tatty homeless spoiling their San Francisco "utopia." The Dickensian conservatives who don't give a fig about a social safety net ensuring that poor people have food on the table.

As Jim Cramer of CNBC's "Mad Money" asked MSNBC's Alex Wagner, "Wasn't this settled in 1848-1850 with the Irish potato famine? I'm not kidding. Lord John Russell believed what the Republicans did, which is, you know, let them eat potatoes even if they're rotten." The issue of laissez-faire, Cramer said, "was decided many years ago by Queen Victoria's insolence toward the Irish."

I relented on "Downton" when I read Alessandra Stanley's review in The New York Times last week pointing out that the allure "isn't Anglophilia or a vestigial yearning for a monarch" but the fact that it's a "show about class differences that panders to contemporary notions of democracy and equality." Watching the saga from the beginning this week, I saw the extent of the subversive fantasy: The servants rule the masters. The bad ones manipulate the lords and ladies into doing their bidding. And the good ones instruct and nag their superiors into making the right moves in their royal lives, both personally and professionally. In Sunday's season premiere, Lady Mary frostily informed Carson the butler that he had overstepped the mark in urging her to move past her grief over her husband's death and get more involved in running the estate. □

Anywhere as long as it's in a tropical vortex.



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Not Just About Us



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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Every day the headlines from the Arab world get worse: An al-Qaida affiliate group, aided by foreign fighters, battles with seven different homegrown Syrian rebel groups for control of the region around Aleppo, Syria. The Iranian Embassy in Beirut is bombed. Mohamad Chatah, an enormously decent former Lebanese finance minister, is blown up after criticizing Hezbollah's brutish tactics. Another pro-al-Qaida group takes control of Fallujah, in Iraq. Explosions rock Egypt, where the army is now jailing Islamists and secular activists. Libya is a mess of competing militias.

What's going on? Some say it's all because of the "power vacuum" - the United States has absented itself from the region. But this is not just about us. There's also a huge "values vacuum." The Middle East is a highly pluralistic region - Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Christians, Druze and various tribes - that for centuries was held together from above by iron-fisted colonial powers, kings and dictators. But now that vertical control has broken down, before this pluralistic region has developed any true bottom-up pluralism - a broad ethic of tolerance - that might enable its people to live together as equal

citizens, without an iron fist from above.

For the Arab awakening to have any future, the ideology that is most needed now is the one being promoted least: pluralism. Until that changes, argues Marwan Muasher, in his extremely relevant new book - "The Second Arab Awakening and the Battle for Pluralism" - none of the Arab uprisings will succeed.

Again, President Barack Obama could have done more to restrain leaders in Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran or Syria from going to extremes. But, ultimately, argues Muasher, this is the Arabs' fight for their political future. If 500,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, and \$1 trillion, could not implant lasting pluralism in the cultural soil there, no outsider can, said Muasher. There also has to be a will from within. Why is it that some 15,000 Arabs and Muslims have flocked to Syria to fight and die for jihadism and zero have flocked to Syria to fight and die for pluralism? Is it only because we didn't give the "good guys" big enough guns?

As Muasher, a former Jordanian foreign minister and now a vice president at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, put it in an interview: "Three years of the Arab uprising have shown the bankruptcy of all the old political forces in the Arab world." The corrupt secular autocrats who failed to give their young people the tools to thrive - and, as a result, triggered these uprisings - are still locked in a struggle with Islamists, who also have no clue how to deliver jobs, services, security and economic growth. (Tunisia may be an exception.) "As long as we're in this zero-sum game, the sum will be zero," Muasher says.

No sustainable progress will be possible, Muasher argues, without the ethic of pluralism permeating all aspects of Arab society - pluralism of thought, pluralism in gender opportunities, pluralism in respect to other religions, pluralism in education, pluralism toward minorities, pluralism of political parties rotating in power and pluralism in the sense of everyone's right to think differently from the collective.

The first Arab awakening in the 20th century was a fight for independence from colonial powers, Muasher says. It never continued as a fight for democracy and pluralism. That war of ideas, he insists, is what "the second Arab awakening" has to be about. Neither the autocrats nor the Islamists can deliver progress. "Pluralism is the operating system we need to solve all our problems, and as long as that operating system is not in place, we will not get there. This is an internal battle. Let's stop hoping for delivery from the outside." This will take time.

Naïve? No. Naïve is thinking that everything is about the absence or presence of U.S. power, and that the people of the region have no agency. That's wrong: Iraq is splintering because Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki behaved like a Shiite militiaman, not an Iraqi Mandela. Arab youths took their future in their own hands, motivated largely by pluralistic impulses. But the old order proved to be too stubborn, yet these youth aspirations have not gone away, and will not.

"The Arab world will go through a period of turmoil in which exclusionist forces will attempt to dominate the landscape with absolute truths and new dictatorships," Muasher writes. □

Lessons To Be Learned In A Year Of Crises

ANTHONY TOMMASINI
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With all the crises in classical music during 2013 - orchestras grappling with ominous deficits, ensembles closing down, opera companies going out of business - have we learned anything? Somewhat surprisingly, Michael R. Bloomberg, when he was still the mayor of New York, may have gotten to the heart of the matter in some blunt comments in September.

The New York City Opera was hovering near death. The company needed \$7 million immediately to avoid bankruptcy and proceed with its scheduled season. When asked whether Bloomberg Philanthropies, which had been supporting the company for years, would come to its rescue, Bloomberg said no. Even if he were to intervene, he added, City Opera's "business model doesn't seem to be working."

That was sadly true. By the end of the September, the 70-year-old company, the "people's opera," was gone for good, probably the worst event in classical music during a year overloaded with crises.

Most people would pick as the year's second-worst story the continuing struggles of the impressive Minnesota Orchestra, where a standoff between the board and the musicians, deadlocked in bitter labor negotiations, resulted in the cancellation of the entire 2012-13 season and, so far, the first half of the current season. In frustration, Osmo Vanska, the orchestra's music director, resigned after a decade of critical acclaim and popular success. So, what is the lesson that Bloomberg implied in his comment? In short, artistic excellence is not enough. Any institution, big or small, old or new, must have a clear artistic vision, a purpose that connects with audiences and the community. But the performing arts have never been profit-making endeavors. It is more important than ever that all institutions, from a

fledgling string quartet to the lofty Metropolitan Opera, have an effective business model.

This may seem obvious. Yet, there is no one business model template in classical music. Each institution has site-specific issues and imperatives. It would be a stretch to link individual crises to an overall story of dysfunction.

Before looking further at the problems, though, let's put things in context. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra seems to be thriving, its players and audience as

alive, have been painful. In October, the Seattle Opera announced that through increased efficiency and production partnerships, it had wiped out its deficit. Sacrifices resulted in fewer productions, staff cuts and the elimination of a young artist program. Still, given the economic challenges these days, Seattle Opera is a success story.

The New York Philharmonic just announced the completion of successful talks with its musicians that will raise salaries 6.5 percent (from a base of \$137,644)

made in 1681 about the state of opera in Venice, a quotation taken from Ellen Rosand's book "Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice," posted by the cellist Jon Silpayamanant on his website. The Minnesota situation is especially dismaying because it seems to have been so preventable. I have been reluctant to assess fault in the standoff. The board has often seemed stubborn and clueless. On the other hand, the most recent offer the administration made to the musicians seemed reasonable. Still,

a deficit of just \$6 million has pushed the orchestra almost to collapse. Gutting wrote, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$500 million to help construct a new football stadium for the Minnesota Vikings. So, in American society we get what we pay for. Our priorities seem clear. The Minnesota musicians have boldly organized a series of concerts this winter and spring on their own. This is hardly a long-term solution. Yet, perhaps their principled determination will shame the board into



Money collected by volunteers for the Minnesota Orchestra's musicians, who are in a protracted contract dispute with the orchestra's board, during a concert at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minn. It has been a difficult year economically for orchestras and classical music across the country, stressing the need for them to develop effective business models.

(Jenn Ackerman/The New York Times)

excited as ever by their music director Riccardo Muti. The same holds for the Los Angeles Philharmonic under its charismatic music director Gustavo Dudamel, which has boasted budget surpluses in 10 of the past 11 years (2008, the year of the great recession, being the exception). This fall, its players signed a four-year contract that will raise base pay roughly 1 percent a year to more than \$150,000. For some institutions, the remedies, though effec-

over the next four years. But the orchestra has been running up deficits that will have to be addressed. Everyone who loves classical music should put its current problems in historical perspective.

Consider this lament on the woeful state of opera: "Profits at the door, the basis of the business investment, instead of growing are diminishing, evidently endangering the continuation of this noble entertainment." This observation was

no outsider can appreciate the pressures on the institution and the positions of the slighted players.

For me, one stunning fact says it all. In a November Opinionator column for the website of The New York Times, "The Real Humanities Crisis," Gary Gutting, a professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, discussed the overall decline of support for the humanities and pointed to the travails of the Minnesota Orchestra. At a time when

forging an agreement. In finding the right business model, a performing arts institution must know where to draw limits. I have long admired the adventurous Riverside Symphony in New York, founded in 1981 by the conductor George Rothman and the composer Anthony Korf, who remain its leaders. The orchestra has admirable initiatives for outreach and education and six interesting CD recordings to its credit. □